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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4478th meeting

Tuesday, 26 February 2002, 5.15 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Aguilar Zinser	(Mexico)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Latona
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 20 February 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/184)

Identical letters dated 20 February 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/182)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

02-26229 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 5.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 20 February 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/184)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Egypt, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with the decision taken at the 4474th meeting, I invite the representative of Israel to take a seat at the Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Jacob (Israel) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the decision taken at the 4474th meeting, I invite the representative of Yemen to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Cappagli (Argentina), Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr. Fonseca (Brazil), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Valdés (Chile), Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Sharma (India), Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Al-Kadhe (Iraq), Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan), Mr. Al-Hadidi (Jordan), Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia), Mr. Bennouna (Morocco), Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Arias (Spain), Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia), Mr. Cengizer (Turkey) and Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 February 2002 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request that I be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda. In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with the decision taken at the 4474th meeting, I invite the Chargé d'affaires, a.i., of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to take a seat at the Council table.

This meeting is convened in accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations. In that connection, I wish to recall that, in my statement as President of the Security Council at the 4474th meeting held on 21 February 2002, I

indicated that members of the Council would shortly hold a debate on the basis of the Secretary-General's statement and propose new initiatives.

In light of the long list of speakers before the Council, I would appeal to all the speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to make efficient use of the Council's time. I am sure that I can count on your understanding and cooperation.

I shall now give the floor to the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine.

Mr. Jilani (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): We wish to convey to you and the members of the Council our gratitude and appreciation for your immediate response to our request to convene an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his statement before the Council and for his tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to bringing the parties back to the negotiating table and to putting an end to the tragic deterioration of the situation.

The immediate response of the Council is an acknowledgement of the extremely dangerous situation in the region and the continuous deterioration of Palestinian-Israeli relations, as well as the ongoing escalation of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority and its leadership. This grave situation threatens to push the region into total confrontation and war.

As the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory continues to decline dramatically and as the toll of death and destruction continues to rise as a result of the ongoing assaults by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority, it is incumbent upon the international community to address this dangerous crisis. The Security Council should uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and undertake the necessary action to remedy this grave situation.

Upon instruction from Prime Minister Sharon, the Israeli occupying forces intensified the bloody military campaign against the Palestinian people and Palestinian institutions. In just the past few days the Israeli occupying forces have killed more than 50 Palestinians, including women and children, and have wrought vast destruction on both public and private Palestinian property. This has included attacks on the official compounds of President Yasser Arafat in Gaza City and Ramallah and the destruction of several police and security installations, as well as of Palestinian radio and television facilities. At the same time, the Israeli occupying forces have repeatedly raided densely populated Palestinian cities and refugee camps. These raids and attacks have resulted in the killing and injury of many Palestinian civilians, many of whom were uprooted from their homes more than 50 years ago and have been living under Israeli occupation for almost 35 years.

Since 28 September 2000, the Palestinian people have suffered flagrant violations of their human rights as defined by international humanitarian law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For over 16 months, they have been subjected to continuous and systematic war crimes and State terrorism being committed by the Israeli occupying forces.

These crimes have included the killing of more than 900 Palestinians, including many children, and the injury of tens of thousands, many of whom have been permanently disabled as a result of the serious injuries sustained. The Israeli occupying forces have also committed crimes of extrajudicial killings; the destruction of homes, buildings, agricultural fields, roads and other infrastructure; the confiscation of more land for settlement activities and the destruction of numerous economic facilities. At the same time, the Israeli Government has ordered the tightening of the military siege and restrictions on the freedom of movement of all Palestinian persons and goods, virtually dividing the occupied Palestinian territory into numerous detention centres, while continuing the military siege of President Arafat and the whole Palestinian population of more than 3 million.

Last week, President Arafat repeated the call he made in December for an immediate and total cessation of all acts of violence. That same day, in an address to the Israeli people, Mr. Sharon declared his intention to continue and escalate the bloody attacks against the Palestinian people and its National Authority by using all Israeli air, land and naval weaponry and continuing the policy of extrajudicial killings.

In addition to all of this, Mr. Sharon decided to set up what he refers to as buffer zones around

Palestinian cities and villages in order to transform them into Bantustans and collective detention jails. He has also decided to build a wall to separate East and West Jerusalem with the aim of entirely isolating Arab Jerusalem and imposing a complete siege from the north, south, east and west. All of these illegal policies and practices are extremely dangerous and aim at breaking the will of the Palestinian people, humiliating them and destroying their national dignity. Mr. Sharon and his Government bear full responsibility for these actions and their dangerous consequences and repercussions.

We have listened with great interest to the statement made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, which we consider to be an important prelude to our discussion. We hope to be guided by it and to build upon it, in order to come out of this meeting with action that is unanimously approved by the members of the Council and that can actively contribute to calming the situation and moving the parties back to the negotiating table. In his statement, the Secretary-General expressed the deep concern of the international community and its conviction that the situation has reached the edge of the abyss and threatens to plunge the entire region into war. We share his concern and support his analysis of the problem and the mechanism for resolving it.

In his statement, the Secretary-General also expressed what we believe to be an international consensus: that there is no military or security solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and there is no alternative to a political solution through the negotiation process. There is also international consensus that the core of the solution depends on addressing the three key problems mentioned by the Secretary-General: the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories, lack of security, and economic depravation. These problems are interlinked and must be addressed in a coordinated manner. The Secretary-General has warned of the danger of attempting to deal with the security issue in isolation from the political issues, specifically the question of land and the socio-economic issues. The failure to appropriately address these issues collectively will result in a situation worse than the one now prevailing.

It must be reiterated here that Mr. Sharon has never concealed his opposition to a final settlement, and he has imposed the condition of seven days of calm, giving those opposed to the peace process ample opportunity to divert any calming of the situation and a return to negotiations. This condition is being imposed on the Palestinian side, while the occupation forces simultaneously continue to commit extrajudicial killings and assault the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority and its security installations. This is all being done by the Israeli side with the purpose of aborting any attempt to implement the Mitchell recommendations and to complete the negotiation process, particularly to avoid the requirements of a freeze of settlement activities.

At the same time, Mr. Sharon's attempts to bury the Mitchell recommendations do not mean that the international community should declare them defunct before an agreed and implementable alternative can be found. Otherwise, the international community once again risks appearing helpless to compel Israel to implement what the international community has accepted and is committed to. The alternative is that Israel alone decides what can and cannot be accepted and when and how what it has accepted is to be implemented, if at all. This is truly a depressing situation.

Despite the pessimism about finding a solution to the Middle East conflict and the hardened position on both Israeli and Palestinian sides, there is a growing conviction on both sides that the requisites for solving this conflict do not differ much whether we reach a solution now, after a year, or after ten years. It is the same solution upon which the whole peace process in the Middle East has been based, as defined in Madrid in 1991 and in the Oslo agreements.

This solution is based on ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967 and on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, to coexist in peace and security with the State of Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders. This is the vision that has received international consensus. This is the vision that was declared by President Bush and detailed by Secretary of State Powell and was welcomed by the Palestinian side. What remains is for it to be accepted by the Israeli side. Herein lies the question of the failure or success of the international community in shouldering its responsibilities through this Council.

Mr. Latona (Mauritius): Let me start by thanking you, Sir, for organizing this open debate on the

situation in the Middle East. We have supported the request of the Group of Arab States for convening this open debate not only because the situation in the Middle East is extremely dangerous and alarming, but more importantly, we fear that if nothing is done to diffuse the situation, we might very soon witness a full-scale war in the region.

We fully concur with the views and concerns expressed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his briefing to the Security Council last Thursday. We remain gravely concerned over the continued downward spiral of events. As we meet to discuss the Middle East issue, it is hard to believe how close the two sides were to reaching an agreement a year ago, and how far apart they are today.

Over the past months, the cycle of violence has only gained momentum and vigour. Violence is breeding more violence. Hate and mistrust are now widespread. Since the September 2000 uprising, more than 900 Palestinians and 250 Israelis have been killed. More than 17,000 Palestinians have been injured. Over the past week alone, violence has taken a toll of 60 more lives. A tit-for-tat response has become the daily feature of the Middle East crisis.

We condemn all acts of provocation and violence from the Israeli side. We also condemn all acts of terror from Palestinian fringe groups, which continue to harm the Palestinian cause. We also mourn the victims of all the bloodshed. It appears as if life has lost all its meaning, especially when we hear of reports of a pregnant woman being shot at an Israeli checkpoint. Against this backdrop, we can see no immediate hope of any de-escalation. While the spiral of violence takes wider proportions, more lives are likely to be lost. With so much suffering, we fear the situation may lead to such a point where it will be nearly impossible to bring the parties back to reason.

What is more disturbing is that the Israeli leadership, it would appear, is sparing no effort to destroy the peace process, from harsher economic blockades to the occupation of Palestinian offices and various extrajudicial killings. With the recent attempt by the Israeli authorities to sideline Chairman Arafat by keeping him under virtual house arrest for almost three months — although there have been some limited steps over the weekend to ease partially the restrictions on his movements — we stand to be convinced that Israel really wants peace and a conclusion of the political process.

The international community has said time and again that there can be no military solution to the Middle East crisis. Yet Israel, under the pretext of defending its population, is resorting only to military action to further oppress the Palestinian people. Israel is demonstrating its power, taking no heed of the call for restraint by the international community. This compounds further the feeling of despair among the Palestinians.

A few days ago, Israeli forces attacked Chairman Arafat's compound in Gaza City, killing four of his military aides. However, let there be no doubt that Chairman Arafat is a symbol of the Palestinian struggle, and he remains the only viable interlocutor and partner for peace. Any attempt to physically eliminate this symbol, by design or otherwise, will only set the entire Middle East ablaze, with dire consequences. Therefore, we strongly urge the Israeli authorities to urgently review their policy towards Chairman Arafat and Palestine.

We share fully the assessment of the Secretary-General that the key problems remain occupation, security, economic deprivation and suffering — all of which are interrelated. It is also important to note that the security aspect will not be resolved if it is not addressed alongside the core political issues. No peace will be achieved if one side is not only reluctant to give up anything, but also wants to take all that it can. We have heard reports of Israeli reservists who have refused to serve in the occupied territories. We can only hope that their action will be an eye-opener for the Israeli authorities.

Since late last year, we have seen growing international consensus that a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be achieved only with the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with the creation of a State of Palestine, which will live in peace with the State of Israel, and with both States enjoying secure and recognized borders. We believe that this growing consensus constitutes a very important step in the search for peace in the Middle East, and the Security Council has a very important role to play in this regard.

Mauritius supports fully the establishment of a Palestinian State and believes that such a move is the only way forward towards a lasting peace in the Middle

East. What the Palestinian people need is a homeland that they can call their own. They cannot be denied this right. In this regard, we believe that the recent proposals of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia contain numerous merits which should be carefully and seriously considered.

Over the past 18 months, we have seen the deep-rooted feelings of hate and mistrust that the Israelis and Palestinians have for each other. We continue to believe that there is a need for third-party intervention to protect the civilians on the ground and help the two parties implement the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee and the Tenet security plan.

For several months now, many protagonists on the ground have attempted — unfortunately without much success — to end the crisis and relaunch the negotiations. While we call upon them to remain fully engaged and to renew their efforts to break the deadlock, we can afford no longer to see inaction and paralysis on the part of the Security Council over the worsening situation in the Middle East.

We tend to behave as if the Security Council's responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security simply did not apply to the Middle East crisis. This is totally unacceptable to my delegation, which believes that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with regard to the Middle East issue until it is completely resolved. More important, the Security Council needs to be proactive to ensure the implementation of its own resolutions regarding the Middle East. The time for action is now, before the peace process is completely shattered, making it impossible to put the pieces back together.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): France associates itself fully with the statement that will be made shortly on behalf of the European Union by the Permanent Representative of Spain.

First of all, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this public debate on the situation in the Middle East, in response to the legitimate and fully justified request by the Palestinians, as conveyed by the Ambassador of Yemen on behalf of the Arab Group.

France believes it is normal and essential that the Security Council, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, be able to debate and express its views on the current situation, which is unquestionably a threat to international peace and security. In his statement last Thursday, the Secretary-General was the voice of wisdom and reason. It is urgent that the Council support the path that he outlined.

The new escalation of violence between Israelis and Palestinians is extremely grave. As the Secretary-General himself stressed last Thursday, the parties are at the edge of the abyss of total war. The number of dead and wounded continues to increase: 977 Palestinians and 279 Israelis killed since September 2000. This toll is intolerable. Both sides are losing. France deplores the loss of human life and sympathizes with the Palestinian and Israeli populations in their suffering; they are the primary victims of this vicious circle of violence and the absence of any hope for peace.

The entire international community, and the Council in particular, are in agreement on the following two points of diagnosis. First of all, there is no military solution to the conflict. The dramatic deterioration in the situation in the last few days cruelly illustrates the stupidity of using force, violence and terrorism. Secondly, the parties need the assistance of the international community to emerge from this trap of violence without falling back into it, so that a real constructive process can be restarted. Naturally, this would assume that there is a shared political will on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides to resume direct dialogue, without which efforts from the outside would be in vain.

The policy of military reprisal has been pursued for more than a year now, and resorting to violence leads nowhere. Violence does not give Israel security; it plunges the Israeli and Palestinian peoples into intolerable conditions of life. The struggle against terrorism must be pursued with the utmost energy, but it must be accompanied by an equally energetic search for a political solution. Peace and security go together. That was the approach courageously taken by Itzhak Rabin; it is also the approach taken here in the Council by the Secretary-General.

There can be no durable ceasefire without the relaunching of a political perspective that corresponds to the legitimate aspirations of Israel and the Palestinians. For Israel, this means full recognition of its right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. For the

Palestinians, it means the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic State as well as an end to the occupation of their territories.

A peace process can take place only between partners. Destroying the Palestinian Authority's infrastructures runs counter to the demands made on it to shoulder its responsibility for a return to calm. Israel also has its part to play in ending provocations such as extra-judicial executions and in lifting the restrictions inflicted on the Palestinian people that feed the cycle of violence. President Arafat must have full freedom of movement.

It is urgent and imperative to re-establish the political track, which has disappeared, and to re-launch a genuine political process of dialogue and negotiation in the Middle East as a whole with a view to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the application of the key principle of land for peace, which has been at the heart of the peace process since it began at Madrid, 10 years ago.

It is this belief in the need to re-launch the political process to give the peoples once more some hope for a negotiated peace that motivates the European Union's ideas, and those of France in particular. As the Council is aware, those ideas include, on the one hand, the holding of elections in the Palestinian territories centred on the theme of peace. On the other hand, they involve recognizing a Palestinian State as a point of departure for a negotiating process. These two proposals complement each other closely. On the one hand, they involve confirming that most Palestinians believe in the principle underlying the peace process. On the other hand, they involve restoring the feeling in Israel that there is a majority in the Palestinian camp that supports peace, and that there are institutions with mandates to resume negotiations.

We are well aware that these proposals raise sensitive questions regarding implementation. Holding a popular referendum under international monitoring would of course mean — on the basis of the Tenet plan and the recommendations of the Mitchell report — that both sides take steps to establish an effective ceasefire and that trust be restored. These measures should lead to the Israeli Army's withdrawing to the positions it held before September 2000 and to a lifting of the restrictions. Our ideas are a contribution to the ongoing reflection. It is a matter of re-mobilizing peace supporters in both camps and emerging from the cycle of violence.

In this context, France also fully supports the courageous and responsible efforts of the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, and of the President of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Abu Alaa. Those efforts should be supported and continued. In broader terms, we pay tribute to, and encourage, the various initiatives for dialogue and informal exchanges of views made recently by peace supporters on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. I am thinking in particular of the two groups meeting around Yasser Abd Rabbo, Sari Nusseibeh, Yossi Sarid and Yossi Beilin. I would also like to recall the peace initiative of the presidents of the Knesset and of the Palestinian Legislative Council, which opens up a path to dialogue among the elected representatives of the two peoples.

Everyone's efforts and ideas are needed and useful. Above and beyond the ideas put forth by France and some of its European partners, many other countries — particularly in the Arab world — have an essential role to play, and can make a useful and constructive contribution. The two countries that have signed a peace treaty with Israel — Egypt and Jordan — are involved in patient and constructive diplomatic efforts that we must encourage. In addition, the involvement of Saudi Arabia, whose Crown Prince suggested some particularly interesting ideas, must be welcomed. We hope that all of this will yield fruit and that it will be widely supported within the Arab world.

Of course, the involvement of the United States, a sponsor of the peace process since the Madrid Conference, is essential. We hope that it will be active and resolute. It will be all the more successful if it is done in concert with the other members of what is referred to as the "quartet", namely, the United Nations, Russia and the European Union.

In closing, what is to be expected of the Security Council? Listening to the Palestinian representative — and I believe that I will soon be listening to the Israeli representative — it seems to me that there is today an opportunity to be seized to engage in a collective and constructive effort so that the Security Council can adopt a text that can contribute to a lasting ceasefire and to restarting a genuine peace process. France is ready to work resolutely to that end.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): This meeting to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, is taking place in the midst of widespread despair over the possibility of achieving a negotiated political solution. In the past 18 months, the situation in the occupied territories and in Israel has fallen into a spiral of violence from which there seems to be no way out.

Israel's excessive use of force, which has an indiscriminate effect on the Palestinian population, as well as selective murders, are practices that have not contributed to the cause of peace, nor have they resolved the security problems of the Israeli people. Likewise, the terrorist attacks by extremist Palestinian groups, which have had an indiscriminate effect on the civilian population of Israel, have not contributed to resolving the problem of the occupation of Palestinian territories, nor have they helped meet the major economic needs of the Palestinian people.

Like many others, we wonder what the right way is to put an end to that spiral of violence. Of course, we consider that a large part of the responsibility rests with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, insofar as it is they who, by their actions and omissions, determine the possibilities for a political solution. But in saying this we must reiterate, as we have on past occasions, that the international community, including the Security Council, can have an impact on, and can make an effective contribution to, bringing the parties back to the negotiating table.

The responsibility of the parties is therefore fundamental. In that respect, we share the views expressed by the Secretary-General in which he made an appeal to the parties to renew their commitment to the Madrid and Oslo principles and to return to a real political dialogue with the goal of achieving a just and lasting solution to the problem of the Middle East. In this regard, Colombia considers that any strategy that seeks to erode the authority of President Arafat and of the Palestinian Authority will only benefit the extremists and move us further from the shared objective of peace. We affirm this while sharing the conviction that President Arafat can and must do more to put an end to the wave of terror.

We recognize that there are no magic formulas for achieving a solution. Even so, we have the Tenet plan, on the one hand, which contains formulas that could reduce the violence and, on the other, the Mitchell report, in which there are bases for a possible return to the negotiating table. The commitment of the parties to these road maps for action, which enjoy wide international support, could allow them, simultaneously and jointly, to discuss the political process, the restoration of security and the economic recovery and development of the Palestinian people.

The international community also has a responsibility to fulfil. In recent months, the Security Council has succeeded in inscribing the question of the Middle East on its regular programme of work, abandoning the sporadic consideration of the item to which we had become accustomed and which, for no good reason, distanced the Security Council from one of the principal threats to international peace and security. Colombia firmly believes that, to the extent possible, the actions of the Council should be linked to and coordinated with the actions of other international players with political relevance in the Middle East on the basis of clear and shared objectives, including the definitive proclamation of a Palestinian State, the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

We recognize that promising initiatives have been put forward at the international level, including those recently proposed by Saudi Arabia. Colombia supports such efforts and welcomes any initiative that might help to break the cycle of violence and create conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations.

Regional or other initiatives that could result from the activities of the so-called quartet made up of the representatives of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the Secretary-General of the United Nations deserve our support. We encourage those actors in the international community that are involved to be tireless in their efforts and to work hand in hand with the Security Council in the search for lasting political solutions.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia is deeply concerned by the ongoing escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Despite the efforts of the international community to help settle that conflict, it has proven impossible to achieve a positive breakthrough. Moreover, the violence is acquiring a logic of its own and its consequences are assuming qualitatively new and more dangerous forms. Breaking the spiral of confrontation would be in the

genuine interests of Palestinians and Israelis alike. There can be no solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by force of arms.

The only possible way out of the impasse is the immediate adoption by both parties of corresponding measures, starting with the implementation of the Tent-Mitchell plan forthwith. On the Palestinian side, this would require putting a halt to any action threatening Israel's security and the lives of civilians, as well as arresting and bringing to justice all those participating in terrorist activities. Israel, for its part, must cease its destruction of the structures of Palestinian national autonomy end the isolation of President Yasser Arafat and halt its extra-judicial assassinations, invasions of Palestinian towns and blockades of Palestinian territories.

Russia calls on both sides immediately and unconditionally to take these steps so as to meet each other half-way, to end the violence and to resume the negotiating process. In the interests of eradicating terrorism and of creating conditions of security, there must be cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, headed by its legitimate leader, Yasser Arafat.

International efforts must also be intensified to overcome the crisis and to restore the situation to the political track. It is equally important that further concerted action be undertaken by the United Nations, Russia, the United States, the European Union and the interested Arab States, including with respect to the new peace initiatives.

We are pleased to note among Palestinians and Israelis alike a growing understanding of the need to overcome these negative dynamics. A delegation of the Palestinian-Israeli coalition for peace is currently in Moscow, composed of eminent politicians and parliamentarians from Israel and Palestine. The resolve of Israeli and Palestinian politicians to work to re-establish trust deserves our respect and support.

In close cooperation with all interested parties, Russia will continue firmly to work to ensure a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); the principles of the Madrid conference, in particular the principle of land for peace; and existing agreements. Our common goal is to establish lasting peace based on equal security for Israel and other States and peoples of the region and to ensure that the Palestinian people enjoy their national rights, including their rights to self-determination and to the creation of a viable sovereign State.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Ireland is fully associated with the statement to be made shortly by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

My authorities are deeply dismayed at the latest surge of violence in the Middle East. They condemn unreservedly all acts of terrorism and violence. They particularly condemn acts that take the lives of civilians and that put the lives of civilians at risk. Such acts are contrary to international humanitarian law and are never justified.

A peace process once bright with hope and promise has dimmed. Acts of violence, a cycle of reprisal and counter-reprisal, political acts of extraordinary pettiness all too often seem to be the order of the day. We cannot allow the hope and promise once offered by the Middle East peace process to slip away. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples are fated by history to live together side by side. Healing and reconciliation offer the only way forward. The current cycle of decay, bitterness and acrimony leads nowhere, but serves to put off the inevitable day when, by political acts of true courage and imagination, the two peoples will be able to live together in healing and reconciliation.

It should be clear to all by now that no solution will be found through terrorism or any other form of violence, or through military action. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples have suffered enough, and it is past time for the Israeli Government and the Palestinian National Authority to take the steps that each knows it must take to bring their peoples' suffering to an end.

The Palestinian Authority must act vigorously and effectively to bring an end to terrorism. Terrorist acts are not only wrong in themselves; they will prolong the suffering of the Palestinian people and will not bring the achievement of their legitimate aspirations one day closer. As has been amply demonstrated, they gave the best possible excuse to those on the Israeli side who wanted to halt the peace process and who now wish to prevent its resumption.

The Israeli Government must likewise accept that the excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings; attacks on the institutions and infrastructure of the

Palestinian Authority; and collective punishment, including house demolitions, economic closures and the impoverishment of Palestinians, are not only wrong and deeply unjust in themselves, but can never bring about the peace and security desired by the Israeli people. Rather will these acts reinforce the resentment and alienation necessary to fuel and sustain campaigns of terror. Again, we draw attention to the corrosive effect that continued settlement activity has had, and continues to have, on the peace process.

A peace process involves partnership. Neither side can choose the partner with whom to deal. There is no choice. Palestinians have no option but to deal with the democratically elected Government of Israel, led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Likewise, only the Palestinian National Authority and its duly elected leader, President Yasser Arafat, can represent the Palestinian people in the peace process. President Arafat, through his physical isolation, has been prevented for many weeks now from travelling and from carrying out his functions. This policy does Israeli no credit. It is seen as vindictive by the international community. It is manifestly counter-productive and should be brought to an end.

Partnership in a peace process means that even though the other partner may be, in a sense, an adversary, one nonetheless acts in a way that will help him to carry out the tasks on his side necessary to advance the peace process. Partnership means having an understanding of the political and other difficulties faced by the other party. Partnership means carrying on, despite the inevitable setbacks. The partnership that was established after Oslo functioned in that way. Israelis and Palestinians demonstrated that they could manage it and build on it. The partnership survived many crises before tragically breaking down.

The minimum level of trust required to restore and sustain the necessary partnership in the Middle East peace process clearly does not now exist. To restore this trust, the sustained and concerted involvement of the international community is required. Last Thursday, Secretary-General Annan said that it was imperative for the Security Council and the wider international community to work in a concerted manner with the parties towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peaceful settlement.

Ireland agrees strongly with the Secretary-General. We have consistently stated in both private and public deliberations of this Council that the Security Council does have a role, and that it should exercise it with care and balance in the interests of helping the peace process. It is entitled to a view, and should be listened to, regarding the implementation of its own resolutions. It should work, as the Secretary-General said, in a concerted manner with the parties themselves, as well as with the others involved, in particular the members of the "Quartet", which includes the European Union. The High Representative of the European Council, Mr. Javier Solana, is in the region at the moment, working with others to help the parties to end the cycle of violence and recommit themselves to the path of political negotiation.

The Secretary-General also referred to new thinking and imaginative new ideas being proposed from several quarters. Ireland agrees with him that this is to be welcomed and that the new ideas should be considered promptly and thoroughly by the international community. Prominent among the new ideas are the reported proposals of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. These deserve the most careful consideration by the parties and all those engaged in mediation, as well as by the Arab world. New ideas have also emerged from the ongoing contacts between Deputy Prime Minister Peres and the President of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Abu Ala.

Ideas like these will contribute to developing the political horizon that is needed to achieve a reduction in violence and a return to the negotiating table. When we discussed the Middle East issue here in December last, all delegations were firmly focused on the implementation of the Tenet understandings and the Mitchell report, because these promised a route back to the negotiating table. However, even though President Arafat's statement of 16 December was followed by a significant reduction in violence, that did not prove sufficient to get the Tenet and Mitchell processes under way. It became clear at that point that something more was required, in the Secretary-General's words, moving beyond a discussion focused on how to pursue Tenet and Mitchell.

Progress on the political and security fronts, as well as on the economic front, must proceed in parallel. The violence between Israelis and the Palestinians does not exist in a political vacuum. It exists primarily because Palestinian national aspirations — legitimate aspirations — have been frustrated.

We are all agreed that a reduction in violence is the most urgent priority. It takes nothing from this priority to say at the same time that it should be made clear to the Palestinian people what they can expect for their political future, and to take steps to help them back to the road of economic and social development. This would strengthen the hand of those working to stop terrorism and end the armed intifada, and it would weaken the hand of those who claim that Palestinian national aspirations are more likely to be brought about by confrontation than by negotiation.

Mr. Negroponte (United States): The United States is deeply troubled by the recent events in the Middle East. We are working intensively to have the parties take a step back from confrontation and a step towards the kind of cooperation that will ease the suffering and establish the basis for a political solution. There is no substitute for direct engagement. Over the past few days, Secretary of State Colin Powell has spoken with Chairman Arafat, Prime Minister Sharon, Secretary-General Annan, European Union High Representative Solana, Arab heads of State and the Foreign Ministers of some of the countries represented in this Chamber today.

There is little disagreement in this Chamber that the present situation must be changed. The solution lies in addressing all three aspects of the problem: political, security and economic. We have a vision of where we think the parties to this conflict should go, and we are working to implement those steps that have the most realistic chance of realizing this vision.

For my Government's part, the vision has been stated at the highest level: a viable State of Palestine living alongside the State of Israel in peace and security. That is the goal at which United States diplomatic efforts are aimed. I would note the positive contribution of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's comments make to the political horizon for the region: real peace between Israel and all its Arab neighbours, arising from a comprehensive peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace.

The public support of several Arab States for these ideas is also important. President Bush spoke with Crown Prince Abdullah this morning and conveyed our desire to work closely with the King of Saudi Arabia in pursuit of Middle East peace. President Bush praised the Crown Prince's ideas regarding full Arab-Israeli normalization once a comprehensive peace agreement is achieved.

How do we help the parties reach their goals? Everyone who has tried to address this question has come up with one conclusion: the road back to real negotiations must start with security. Without effective security cooperation, that horizon will remain just that: something longed for but not achieved. But this road cannot end with security. Just as progress towards the political horizon cannot be made without effective security cooperation, so, too, is sustained security cooperation much more likely if there is a real prospect for political progress.

The challenge before us is how to move the parties from where they are now to the kind of relationship that will lead to productive negotiations. Extremists remain determined to sabotage peace in the region. The Palestinian Authority must help eliminate the danger they pose — not only to Israelis, but also to the legitimate aspirations of its own people to a safe and secure future.

Security is not a one-way street. Israel, too, must meet its obligations. Chairman Arafat requires an infrastructure to implement his orders. Actions by Israel against the Palestinian security apparatus charged with preventing violence and terror are counterproductive. The United States is looking to both parties to help create an environment for moving forward.

But my Government is not simply calling for action on the security front. We are bringing the parties together — away from the limelight — to find practical solutions to their differences. Last Friday's meeting between the parties was positive, and these discussions are continuing today.

My Government is intent on encouraging the parties to implement the Mitchell Committee recommendations. Mitchell is the means by which the parties can restore calm and rebuild enough confidence — in each other and in the process itself — to restart a real political dialogue. The Mitchell recommendations indeed contain a political context, and they are designed to lead to a political outcome. We hope that this outcome will reflect the vision outlined by President Bush and Secretary Powell.

The third element of our approach — the economic element — is no less important. My

Government is preoccupied by the deteriorating economic situation of Palestinians. President Bush highlighted this problem during Prime Minister Sharon's visit to Washington. In addition to our longstanding assistance programmes, we are moving ahead with a $130 million emergency response programme that includes financing for health and job-creation projects. We are also implementing over $200 million in long-term infrastructure projects to help bring clean water to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. In addition, we are the largest single donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and will contribute $88 million to that organization this year.

I began my remarks by underscoring our concern over the deteriorating situation between Palestinians and Israelis. We are trying to find the best means to reverse this deterioration. As a practical matter, Security Council action at this time will not resolve the problems between Palestinians and Israelis.

The Secretary-General has wisely said that while the situation is bleak, the present course of events is not irreversible. We agree. The United States is committed to helping the parties move forward. We want, and hope, to send General Zinni back to the region as soon as conditions are appropriate. We ask the Council to perform its task responsibly — in a way that will further the cause of peace with due regard for the interests of all parties concerned.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The peace process in the Middle East is facing its most serious crisis ever. Norway is extremely concerned about the dramatic escalation of violence in recent weeks. Present developments are threatening all of the achievements made since the Declaration of Principles was signed in 1993.

Norway strongly condemns the Palestinian terrorist attacks, including the use of Kassam rockets. The Palestinian Authority must fight Palestinian terrorism vigorously and dismantle the terrorist networks. We welcome the arrest of the suspected murderers of Israeli Minister Ze'evi as an important step in this regard.

The security situation did improve after President Arafat's 16 December speech. Norway very much regrets that Israel did not take advantage of that positive momentum.

The Israeli bombardment of Palestinian cities and institutions, which has led to death and destruction on a scale unprecedented since the start of the peace process, is unacceptable. These Israeli military operations are out of proportion in relation to military, security and police needs. Norway fails to see how these attacks can contribute to greater security.

It is Norway's conviction that both parties must now adopt forceful and immediate measures to stop the escalating violence. These steps include the following.

The Palestinian Authority must do its utmost to halt Palestinian terrorist attacks. Continued terrorist attacks cannot be tolerated.

Israel must stop its attacks on Palestinian infrastructure, stop incursions into area A, withdraw its armed forces, lift completely the house arrest of President Arafat, stop the targeted killings, lift the closure and transfer the value-added tax (VAT) owed to the Palestinians.

A serious political dialogue must be resumed immediately, with the aim of ending the Middle East conflict and establishing a viable Palestinian state based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as well as the Oslo Accords.

The Tenet plan and the Mitchell recommendations must be implemented immediately and unconditionally.

Humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinians must be increased to counter the increasingly difficult economic and social situation.

The international community, and indeed the Council, must stand united in its demand that these measures are implemented.

The Israeli and Palestinian leaders seem today locked in a battle with no exit strategies. This is untenable. The final responsibility to end the hostilities continues to lie with the parties themselves. At the same time, the Security Council must assist the parties in reaching this goal. Norway stands ready to make its contribution in this regard.

The aim of the Oslo process was to end the occupation and to create security for Israel. We can still achieve that goal, but only if a political process is started now. In that regard, Norway finds the informal ideas presented by Saudi Arabia very interesting

indeed. Norway strongly encourages the further exploration of those ideas.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): It was a good format to listen to the Secretary-General two working days ago, to consider his words, and then to have an exchange of views this evening. The Secretary-General came very close to articulating what every Member of the United Nations can accept as common ground. His is therefore an approach on which we should be building.

These meetings have been taking place against a backdrop of increasing violence and despair in the Middle East. The statement which Spain will later deliver on behalf of the European Union expresses very clearly the urgency with which we all feel efforts to end the violence must proceed. As Ambassador Ryan implied in his remarks earlier, there has recently been a failure of courage and imagination on both sides. We all know that the only effective solution is through a return to dialogue and negotiation. The precise obligations on each side to bring violence and terrorism to an end are well spelled out in the European Union statement.

Our goal remains a two-State solution: a State of Israel and a viable Palestinian State, both secure within recognized borders. The recent remarks by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia give extra momentum to that objective. His vision of full normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours is very welcome. We hope that other countries in the region will build on it.

An end to occupation can be achieved only by negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, leading to a just, final and comprehensive settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of land for peace. The parties must focus on creating the conditions for the success of those negotiations. That can most readily be done by their implementing in parallel the obligations they have accepted under the Tenet security plan and the Mitchell Committee report.

But the United Kingdom sees ample evidence that the parties alone cannot now find their way back to the path of peace. Mutual trust and confidence have disappeared as the levels of violence have increased and the intifada has continued. We therefore welcome and encourage the sustained engagement of the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator, the Governments of the United States, the European Union and its Member States and Russia, and those in the region and further afield who remain determined that peace can and must be achieved. The United Kingdom, for its part, will remain an active member of that category.

We continue to believe that if the Council is to act effectively it must speak unanimously. An analysis of the speeches made by Council members so far in this debate indicates a wide area of common ground. We must play our proper role and enlarge on that. Further than that, the international community must speak with one voice. We must all remain focused on urging the parties to fulfil their responsibilities to end the violence and to return to the negotiating table.

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): This is the third time the Security Council has met in less than two weeks, which demonstrates that, as the Secretary-General has observed, the situation in the Middle East remains highly explosive and demands that we address it with resolve and clear-sightedness. Here, I join all preceding speakers in expressing concern at what we are agreed is the unending cycle of violence and counter-violence that is now the daily lot of the Israeli and Palestinian populations.

In that region, every passing day brings its train of misfortune and senseless destruction, futile attacks and aimless bombings, whose purpose is simply to draw the parties to the conflict away from the path of reconciliation, dialogue, understanding and final peace. The delegation of Guinea is deeply concerned at this intolerable situation. We reaffirm that blind violence and reckless disregard for the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law can lead only to chaos. We unequivocally condemn these acts, which cannot be justified on either political or moral grounds. Guinea urges both parties to renounce confrontation and thus to protect the last chance to resume negotiations; hence the need quickly to achieve a lasting ceasefire.

Israel must put an end to the destruction of infrastructure and to the closure of autonomous Palestinian areas; it must end its house arrest of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. The comparative freedom of movement he has recently been permitted within Ramallah is insufficient. The Palestinian leader must regain all his rights and full freedom of movement. Israel must also withdraw from the

autonomous Palestinian areas and must give up its exclusively military policy.

Likewise, Hamas and other fringe groups must cease their suicide attacks against Israeli civilian populations.

As international bodies, notably the Security Council, have repeatedly reaffirmed, the only viable way out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is through a cessation of hostilities, a return to a better frame of mind, and the rapid resumption of negotiations based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the Tenet plan and the recommendations of the Mitchell report. Otherwise, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will slip further into deadlock, inevitably leading to a large-scale war that will endanger peace and security not only in the Middle East but internationally.

To lay new groundwork in the search for an equitable solution to this thorny problem, my delegation endorses any new initiative — such as the recent initiative by Crown Prince Abdullah — that can strengthen the Middle East peace process, because in the present situation we should overlook no way of helping the Israeli and Palestinian sides to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict that has divided them for so long, and thus to create true peace between Israel and all its Arab neighbours.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I wish first to say that Bulgaria fully endorses the statement to be made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union. I have a few brief comments to make in my national capacity.

Bulgaria joins in expressing profound concern at the escalation of violence in the Middle East. The recent attacks clearly demonstrate that we are witnessing an unprecedented deterioration of the situation on the ground. The spiral of violence has resulted in the loss of human life, which we deplore most deeply. The urgent necessity of stopping this spiral of death is evident.

As we have already had the occasion to say before the Council, Bulgaria believes that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians should be resolved through direct negotiations between the parties concerned on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

My country calls for the immediate cessation of any further acts of terrorism. We also call for the cessation of the often disproportionate and useless reprisals. We fully support the Secretary-General's appeal to the parties to the conflict to put an end to confrontation and mutual accusations and to return to the negotiating table. It is absolutely crucial that the parties begin to implement without delay the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee and the Tenet plan in order to arrive at a lasting ceasefire. This would help to reduce violence and restore the conditions for reviving the peace process — conditions which have substantially deteriorated. The greatest priority among these conditions is undoubtedly that of security. Even a minimum of security will allow the political process to succeed. It is unnecessary to point out the importance of economic conditions in the occupied territories, which are currently deplorable and must be markedly improved.

Bulgaria fully supports the efforts of the "quartet", and we call upon the parties to make an effort to follow the recommendations of the representatives of those countries and organizations that are working tirelessly for a solution to the Middle East problem. My country attaches special importance to the efforts of the European Union aimed at finding a solution to this complex and dangerous situation. In this respect, we fully support the European Presidency's statement on the Middle East issued on 20 February 2002.

Bulgaria welcomes the willingness of the Israeli Government to discuss with Saudi Arabia its ideas for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. In this respect, the information just given to us by Ambassador Negroponte on the contacts with President Bush seems to us of particular interest.

Bulgaria is prepared to work within the Council so that all members of the Council can find a common ground of understanding on the question of the Middle East. As Ambassador Greenstock has just said, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's statement to the Council as well as the statements of all the delegations thus far allow us to hope that a common ground of understanding can be found within the Council.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to convey to you, Mr. President, my sincerest thanks and gratitude for your quick response to the request of the Arab Group

to convene this session of the Security Council to consider the extremely dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and to take the necessary action in that regard.

Allow me to reiterate our thanks to the Secretary-General for the statement he delivered before the previous open meeting, in which he set out his views on the developments in the occupied territory.

The grave deterioration of the situation in the occupied Arab territories as well as the alarming spiral of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and its infrastructure — particularly in the past few days — constitute a blatant violation of international law and international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. These actions also violate the relevant Security Council resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israeli occupation forces have committed a series of criminal actions which daily cause the death and injury of dozens of people and now total around a thousand Palestinian martyrs and thousands of injured Palestinians since the beginning of the intifada. This is in addition to the imposition of the policy of siege, starvation, destruction and the killing of children, the elderly and women, as well as what was mentioned by the representatives of Mauritius and Palestine.

Israel has atrociously exploited the will of the international community to combat terrorism after 11 September. With the pretext of combating terrorism — as if others were not fighting terrorism — it has attempted to classify resistance against occupation, self-defence and the defence of land and dignity as terrorism, thus violating the principles of international law and world ethics. Israel is trying to cover up the war of genocide it is waging against the Palestinian people. It is natural that the wave of internal Israeli criticism and external criticism against Mr. Sharon's policy towards the Palestinian people is increasing: that policy violates all laws. In particular, the Israeli Government is committing daily massacres that express the hysteria prevailing in the ruling institutions of Israel.

Events have proved that the achievement of security for Israel alone is a myth, because security must be achieved for all. Security cannot be achieved without laying its basic foundation: peace. Peace is lacking.

Bitterness at this approach has been expressed in the refusal of many Israeli regular and reserve officers to do military service in the occupied Palestinian territories. I quote from a statement by one Israeli officer: "The occupation practices are war crimes according to all international criteria. Atrocities are carried out in the Palestinian areas. It is inconceivable to control 3 million persons who are starving and whose basic right to live is denied. This is inconceivable."

If the Israeli officer who observed these events has rebelled and expressed such indignation, what does the international community, particularly the Security Council, expect from the Palestinian people, who are suffering from hunger, injustice, suppression and occupation, with all their negative aspects? What does it expect the Palestinian people to do? Does this people not have the right to rebel against and resist occupation in order to regain its rights and land? This is a legitimate right enshrined in the Charter and Council resolutions.

The main reason for what is transpiring in the occupied Arab territories is the Israeli occupation of territories in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. In this connection, it seems that Israel has not yet realized the fact that killing begets only killing and violence begets only violence and destruction. Destruction will only lead to destruction and the occupation will only generate resistance. This is a legitimate resistance. Security will not be brought about without the achievement of a full, comprehensive and just peace for everyone in the region.

In the light of this gloomy picture — the Israeli Government's escalation of assassinations of Palestinian citizens and leaders, destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and institutions, daily massacres by the Sharon Government — which I will not enumerate here — its attempts to impose genocidal war and ethnic cleansing, and the effects of these practices on peace and security in the region — the Security Council, which the Charter has entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, is called upon first to denounce and condemn the persistent Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

Secondly, it must call upon Israel to cease immediately its acts of aggression in the occupied territories, to forgo its policy of siege, starvation and

assassination of Palestinian citizens and leaders and to return to negotiations with a view to achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

Thirdly, it must call upon Israel to implement all relevant Security Council resolutions and not exempt it from complying with United Nations resolutions.

Fourthly, the Council should emphasize that the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War is applicable to the occupied Arab territories.

Fifthly, it should hold the Sharon Government fully accountable for the crimes perpetrated against the Palestinians in the occupied territories. We should be courageous in this regard.

Sixthly, it should reiterate its clear-cut stand on the Israeli policy of settlement in the Arab territories since 1967, including Jerusalem, particularly as put forward in resolution 465 (1980).

Seventhly, the Council should emphasize the need for Israel to abide by the Madrid peace process. That process was approved by the international community; it is based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of land for peace. This is particularly important, since Israel is trying to bide its time and thwart the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace. It is also trying to avoid a complete withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 line, and the remaining occupied parts of the Lebanese territories.

There are numerous peace initiatives. Many initiatives may also emerge. But we have a clear-cut initiative. There is a peace process. That process requires clear and explicit political will and not further initiatives. So long as the process is based on the resolutions of this august Council, the peace that we aspire to is one that is just and comprehensive, in line with the Madrid peace process and its terms of reference, based on Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as I mentioned, and the principle of land for peace. The emphasis by the Security Council on such a peace is needed now more than ever, so as not to waste time and to avoid an increase in violence in the region.

This is particularly necessary, since Israel has not concealed in any way its intentions to evade the requirements of a comprehensive peace by maintaining its occupation of the Arab territories. Otherwise, what is the justification for the continued occupation? While Israel claims that it is seeking peace, it is conducting a systematic political process to kill the peace process.

If Israel wishes to live in peace, it must weigh its options. By renouncing occupation – and this is a simple matter set out and approved by the Security Council – it must respond to the requirements of a just and comprehensive peace, chosen as a strategic goal by the Arabs. Israel must realize that it cannot hold on to the land of others and enjoy peace at the same time.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Once again, the Security Council is meeting on the situation in the Middle East, as the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians shifts to a deeper and more dangerous level.

Singapore is deeply distressed that the escalation of violence has continued unabated, resulting in the senseless loss of so many innocent civilian lives for far too long. By some estimates, more than 1,200 people have been killed since the conflict began in September 2000, some three quarters of them Palestinian.

Targeting civilians and acts of terrorism are deplorable and must be unequivocally condemned. We are also deeply concerned about the bombardments near United Nations installations, which have caused damage to United Nations facilities and threaten the safety and security of United Nations personnel. The situation is certainly of grave concern to the entire international community and demands the urgent and sustained attention of the Security Council.

We are therefore encouraged that as a first step, the Council has reacted so promptly and responsibly to the request of the Group of Arab States and the members of the League of Arab States in convening the open meeting last Thursday, 21 February, to listen to the briefing by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We have consistently supported the efforts of the Secretary-General as a neutral and even-handed facilitator.

We are also encouraged that in the past two months, Council members have had the benefit of listening to two excellent briefings – one by the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, and the other by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast. These briefings, as the

Council knows, are a new practice adopted by the Council, and we believe that they have been useful. They have broadened Council members' understanding of the problem and of the various diplomatic initiatives undertaken.

We are pleased that all United Nations Members had the opportunity to listen to a similar briefing by the Secretary-General last week, which clearly established that the interlinked problems of occupation, security and economic distress must be handled together. Like the Palestinian representative, we believe that these briefings could help frame subsequent and perhaps more important deliberations on the possible action that the Council could undertake, which should be unanimously approved by Council members.

Public debates alone cannot solve the problem in the Middle East. There is also no lack of diplomatic initiatives and prescriptions on how to bring the parties back from the abyss that the Secretary-General has spoken about. The so-called "Quartet" comprising the representatives of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations have laid down clear demands on both sides in their joint statement of 25 October 2001 — a statement supported by all members of the Security Council.

The report of the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-finding Committee, or the Mitchell report, has been accepted by the two parties and endorsed by the international community as a compass to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. Unfortunately, 10 months after the issuance of the Mitchell report, the preconditions and timetable that had been laid down to implement the report have in effect made it an obstacle to peace.

What is needed right now are ways to turn the Mitchell report on its head and use it for the purpose for which it was intended. To do this, we must recognize that at the end of the day, it is the parties involved who must bear their respective responsibilities and obligations and take the necessary strategic decisions to return to the negotiating process. The map and the compass have been provided to the parties. It is ultimately up to them to put two and two together to find the peace which has thus far proved elusive. However, given the climate of deep distrust and mutual recrimination and the cycle of violence and counteraction, we strongly believe that outside help is urgently needed. I believe that Ambassador Greenstock made the same point when he spoke earlier.

The question is, what kind of external mechanism could make a real difference? The Security Council, with its Charter responsibility to maintain international peace and security, is certainly one such body, and it cannot neglect its responsibility. The "Quartet" is also a useful mechanism. In addition, there are many countries both within and beyond the region which have equally pivotal roles to play. Indeed, the strong interest expressed thus far in the informal proposal put forward by Saudi Arabia, and the positive references to that proposal that we have heard this afternoon, illustrate the positive role that other parties can play.

Therefore, perhaps what is needed is coordination and collaboration between these various players. We should find and make use of the comparative advantage of each of these mechanisms. Each mechanism should complement the efforts of others, not undermine them. We, the international community, hold the key to turning things around in the Middle East. Therefore, we believe that the Security Council could best contribute to the efforts of collective action by coordinating our positions, finding common ground and, as far as possible, speaking with one voice. As the Secretary-General said here last week, the Security Council should work in a concerted manner with the parties themselves as well as with the others involved. This is how the Council can be the most effective.

We note that the focus is on the immediate priority of breaking the cycle of violence. At the same time, we agree fully with the Secretary-General's observation that the political horizon of the hopes for peace must also be provided. Indeed, the causes of the current situation are fully intertwined. Occupation breeds violence; violence begets violence and causes economic deprivation; and dire socio-economic conditions in their turn feed extremism. Thus it is only logical to state that sustainable peace can be achieved only through a comprehensive approach comprising the political, economic and security tracks. Measures taken simultaneously on all these areas can be mutually reinforcing and buttress any agreements reached.

Ultimately, it is indisputable that there is no military solution to the crisis in the Middle East, and we are glad that several speakers have stressed that point this afternoon. Violence cannot take the place of dialogue and negotiations. A just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through a negotiated settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and

338 (1973) and the Madrid principle of land for peace. On this, there is complete unanimity.

Furthermore, even in these dark days we must remember the gains made in the other peace processes in the Middle East, including the Camp David Accords, the Madrid Conference and the Oslo peace accords. The longer it takes for the parties to find their way back to the path of peace, the harder it will be to fully realize these gains.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In recent days there have been frequent incidents of violence in the Middle East. The continued escalation of the conflict between Palestine and Israel has not only inflicted more death and casualties on innocent civilians, it also threatens to plunge the region into even greater calamity at any moment. China opposes the Israeli military attacks and its economic blockade against Palestine, as well as its actions to jeopardize the security of the lives and property of Palestinian civilians. China also opposes all acts of violence against innocent civilians.

The continued escalation of the violence between Palestine and Israel has long since demonstrated clearly that the approach of stopping violence with violence leads nowhere and that peace talks represent the only hope for the eventual realization of peace. The Chinese Government has repeatedly pointed out recently that maintaining the authority of the Palestinian National Authority, headed by Mr. Arafat, will be conducive to easing the current tension in the Middle East and to promoting the resumption of peace talks between Israel and Palestine. To isolate Arafat and to restrict his freedom is unwise and will, in fact, backfire.

China has always maintained that the key to a resolution of the question of the Middle East lies in the termination of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and in the restoration of the Palestinian people's legitimate national rights on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace. At the same time, the security of Israel should also be guaranteed.

In his briefing to the Security Council on 21 February, Secretary-General Annan made a number of important points. Among other things, he said that the lack of mutual confidence between the two sides makes the role of a third party essential and that there needs to be new thinking and imaginative ideas for the resolution of the violent conflict between Palestine and Israel. He also said that security has to be addressed alongside key political issues — particularly the question of land — and the economic and social issues, including the increasingly critical desperate situation of the Palestinians.

Just as the Secretary-General pointed out, under the current circumstances there is great need for the Security Council and the international community to increase their attention and input vis-a-vis the Middle East. The Security Council should play its due role in easing the situation in the Middle East and in resuming the Middle East peace talks. We hope that Council members will make efforts in a constructive spirit so that the Council will contribute to easing tension in the Middle East and ending the violent conflict between Palestine and Israel.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Cameroon would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at the request of the League of Arab States.

The prevailing situation in that part of the world is a subject of very serious concern, as it is fraught with peril for peace and security and with dangers for mankind and human life. The gruesome statistics that we have just heard are particularly indicative of assassinations, butchery and destruction. Since September 2000, 977 Palestinians and 279 Israelis have been killed. How long will it continue? The peace process is quite obviously imperilled, as everything seems to be converging to stoke hate and violence. All of this gives a particularly historic and tragic tone and importance to our debate today.

We would like to welcome the presence of Israel and Palestine among us, whose peoples are at this very moment looking to the Security Council with both disquiet and, above all, hope. The peoples of the United Nations who live in the Middle East are expecting the Council to urge the leaders of these two countries to put an end to intolerance and violence and to get the peace process back on track. These peoples are waiting for the Council to hasten reconciliation between people and understanding between nations. They are waiting for a time when the clash of arms will be replaced by the song of peace.

Peace in the Middle East assumes the creation of a Palestinian State. Peace in the Middle East assumes recognition of Israel and its right to live within secure and recognized borders. Peace in the Middle East therefore involves the strict implementation by all the parties of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which resolution 338 (1973) refers to, as well as the implementation of the fundamental principle of land for peace. Those are the necessary prerequisites for a just and lasting peace, namely, a peace in whose establishment all parties have been involved; a peace that stems from dialogue and negotiation free from any violence. Such a peace cannot be imposed by force of arms. Peace imposed by force of arms is always doomed to failure. That has always been the conviction of Cameroon, and the position defended by my country.

It is therefore up to the Security Council to encourage both the Palestinians and the Israelis to resume the path of negotiation and dialogue in order to promote a just peace based on various new and old initiatives, including the recent initiative put forth by Saudi Arabia.

It is up to us — as we have always said and now reiterate — to create, on their behalf and within their hearts, a genuine culture of peace around those two brotherly people who are condemned to live together, as is often forgotten. It is up to us to help those two brotherly peoples — who have waged war against each other for more than 50 years now — to make peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Oman, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman), took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Mexico.

In this Chamber, we recently heard the Secretary-General state that, unless something happens, it is very probable that violence will further increase in the Middle East. Those words posed a major challenge to us all, to the Israelis and Palestinians, to the community of the Middle East, to the international community as a whole and thus to the United Nations.

The establishment of peace in the Middle East hangs over the international community as an unfinished task, an assignment that periodically absorbs our collective conscience with the heartbreaking images of an apparently endless conflict. The States Members of the United Nations should not allow despair to prevail. We must not become insensitive to those images of death and destruction. The violence that threatens to spread everywhere cannot be the way to a solution. There is no military solution and we shall not tire of repeating that.

It is imperative to break the spiral of violence and to protect the civilian population in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law. We agree with those at this table who have affirmed that there is nothing — no international action or initiative — that can replace the will of the parties to negotiate. We therefore call on that will to resume direct dialogue.

The international community, however, does have a clear responsibility in the Middle East that it cannot shirk. It is a responsibility of the United Nations and, of course, of the Security Council. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, we must find new and imaginative formulas and viable proposals to fulfil this mission. Above all, we must be prepared to that end to discuss the matter in the Security Council and to do so in a spirit of mutual consideration and understanding.

In recent weeks, we have had four opportunities to address this item — two in consultations and two in public meetings. In the light of circumstances and developments, this process is already leading the Security Council to consider promising and viable initiatives. Tonight's debate is in itself an opportunity that has been fully exploited to explore the approaches being sought by the international community. Members of the Council have indeed referred to very relevant proposals, such as the initiative of Saudi Arabia that is today the subject of attention and consideration in Israel, Palestine, the Arab countries, Europe and the United States.

It is also up to the United Nations to explore confidence-building mechanisms. The role of the United Nations Special Coordinator is especially relevant in that regard, both in and of itself and within the context of the so-called quartet. It also falls to the United Nations to promote humanitarian activities, attending to the needs of the civiljan population and advancing reconciliation. For all of these reasons, and given our hopes for the future, my country is convinced and firmly believes that the United Nations is a part of the solution.

Other international efforts are also highly relevant and must not be abandoned. The international community greeted with hope the results of the Madrid conference in 1991, the Oslo Accords in 1993, the Sharm el-Sheikh summit in 2000 and the proposals contained in the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan. Israelis and Palestinians should not forget those commitments because they are a symbol of what can be achieved when there is a will. Mexico would like to see that hope for dialogue and peace in the region rekindled. Reconciliation, mutual trust and prudence: these are what the Mitchell report recommends.

We call on the parties promptly to implement the recommendations of the Tenet plan and the Mitchell report. While, the ceasefire is important, it is necessary that negotiations begin immediately between the parties as a demonstration of the willingness and desire firmly to resume a long-term peace process.

Mexico reaffirms the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish a State and the need for the resolutions of the United Nations, specifically Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), to be implemented. We also reiterate our position in support of the right of all States of the region to live in peace within secure and recognized borders and to prosper together. Mexico urges the representatives of the quartet — the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations — to intensify their cooperation with the parties in order to find a solution to the current situation in the occupied territories. Given its vital importance, we must follow up — and Mexico will do so — the Saudi Arabian proposal for a peace plan for the region.

Lasting peace in the Middle East is the political goal to which we aspire. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that, if peace is achieved, the task of reconstruction will then be on the agenda. Once peace has been attained, the necessary material and emotional capacities will have to be restored. That will require a coordinated effort on the part of all of the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and the international community.

It is more difficult to bring back to a people its hope in the future than to lay power cables or build a house. But, working together, we must find a way to achieve both objectives at the same time — hope in the future, and development. As an international community, we have an obligation to support, both morally and materially, economic reconstruction, mutual confidence-building and individual and collective prosperity for all the peoples and communities of that region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

We will now continue with the list of speakers. May I remind representatives of the request that statements be limited to five minutes.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for this month, and to congratulate your predecessor, the representative of Mauritius, for his most able leadership.

The people and Government of Israel are committed to negotiating a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Middle East. This is a commitment that is unshakeable and rooted in our fundamental belief in the right of all the peoples in the region to live in freedom, peace and security. Even after more than a year of violence, we remain committed to the agreed terms of reference of the peace process, which require the sides to engage in direct face-to-face negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Furthermore, we have accepted the Mitchell plan and the Tenet recommendations in their entirety as a road map out of the morass of conflict and towards negotiations and a future of peace.

Israel demonstrated its commitment to peace in the negotiations at Camp David in July 2000 and in the unprecedented compromises and extraordinary risks we were willing to take for the sake of peace. Such compromises could have been accomplished only within the framework of direct face-to-face

negotiations. History has repeatedly shown that peace cannot be imposed and that there can be no substitute for direct talks between the parties.

Israel's far-reaching peace proposals were rewarded with a deliberate campaign of violence and terrorism. For 17 months, Israel has faced an orchestrated campaign, incited and supported by the highest levels of the Palestinian leadership. Israeli civilians have been subjected to every manner of terrorist atrocity: suicide bombers in crowded restaurants and cafes, abductions and murders of our citizens, ambushes and sniper attacks on the roads, and missile attacks against our territory. Even as the international community has firmly and repeatedly called for a cessation of hostilities, the Palestinian leadership has equivocated and taken half measures in public, while continuing to plot violence in secret.

And now a new threat is emerging. Last week, Turkish forces detained three individuals linked to Al-Qaeda who had travelled from Afghanistan, through Iran, to Turkey, and who intended — had they not been arrested — to continue on to Lebanon and into Israel to carry out a terrorist attack in an Israeli city.

The Palestinian leadership purports, before the world, to condemn terrorism, while legitimizing and supporting it at home. To Western audiences, Palestinian representatives have been known to speak in the language of peace, but to their own people they speak in the language of hatred and holy war. Murder and martyrdom are glorified in Palestinian Authority schools and textbooks; members of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups are embraced as national heroes. In December, when Chairman Arafat was finally pressured sufficiently to call for a ceasefire, he immediately undermined that call by making a speech in which he called for a million martyrs to sacrifice themselves on behalf of the Palestinian cause. Here in the United Nations, the Palestinians often declare their fidelity to the international campaign against terror, but just as often they undermine that claim by distinguishing between certain attacks and others. Does the Palestinian side truly want us to believe that attacking innocent Israeli children can be considered a legitimate act of resistance?

The international community must make absolutely clear that there is no justification whatsoever for acts of terrorism. The current international campaign against terrorism is predicated on this principle: no distinctions are made between so-called "good" terror and "bad" terror, or between the terrorists and the regimes that harbour and support them. The same must apply in this case, as well.

When Chairman Arafat made his historic commitment, enshrined in his letter of 9 September 1993 to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, he showed no confusion as to what was considered terrorism. He renounced terrorism fully and without distinction, and committed himself to resolving all outstanding issues on the basis of the agreed terms of reference, through direct negotiations with Israel. Furthermore, the Palestinians claim to have accepted the Mitchell report, which defines terrorism without distinction and calls for a complete cessation of violence. How can that position possibly be consistent with the Palestinian leadership's brazen support for terrorism?

We must be clear: there is no cause so just, no grievance so severe, no objective so noble, that it can justify the deliberate killing of civilians.

Where do we go from here? It is our view that the only path forward requires an immediate, complete and unconditional cessation of violence as a crucial first step in restarting the process and rebuilding trust between the parties. Reaching a settlement of the conflict cannot be done in an atmosphere of hatred and violence, and negotiations cannot be conducted under the threat of terror. That makes neither moral, nor political, nor diplomatic sense. Israel cannot be expected to sit down and negotiate with the very same individuals who are supporting and engaging in terror. Nor can the Palestinians purport to negotiate peace while they prepare for a future conflict.

Such duplicity, in the midst of an unrelenting terrorist campaign, sends a message to Israelis that the Palestinians have still failed to come to terms with the very right of the State of Israel to exist. It serves to confirm the suspicion that, in the eyes of many Palestinians, the peace process is simply war by another name. If the Palestinian leadership truly wanted to live peacefully side by side with Israel, it would not be fuelling hatred and condoning the murder of Israeli men, women and children on a daily basis. The Palestinian leadership has failed to demonstrate, either to the Israeli people or to the international community, or, perhaps more importantly, to the

Palestinian people themselves, that its goal is peaceful coexistence.

The only constructive action to be taken here is for the international community to exert pressure on the Palestinian leadership to abandon its campaign of terror and embrace a peaceful solution to the conflict. If the Council were to do anything other, it would send the message that violence is acceptable. This is a prescription for more violence and more terror and for the worsening of the current state of affairs.

The international community must resist the tendency to approach the conflict in the Middle East by attempting to find some middle ground between terrorists and their victims, to forge a compromise between those who initiate violence and those who must defend against it. There is no moral equivalence between the two. For 17 months the Palestinians have been intent on proving that violence works; Israel is intent on proving that it does not.

The Security Council must not be neutral here, nor should it encourage Palestinian violence by offering an ever-expanding package of rewards and incentives in exchange for a ceasefire. Violence must be ended unconditionally. After nearly a year and half of bloodshed, inspired and supported by the Palestinian leadership, offering any incentive in exchange for ending the terror is sure to result only in more terror.

The real tragedy of the Middle East conflict is that barely a year and a half ago, the peace process had brought us so close to achieving a final settlement. Israel remains willing to re-energize that process. We repeat: we are committed to the sequence of steps outlined in the Mitchell report, the first of them being a complete cessation of violence. We are further committed to a return to the agreed terms of reference of the peace process, and we are resolved that violence will not be rewarded and will not be permitted to influence the outcome of issues that are to be negotiated between the parties.

I urge the Council to support the position that violence is unacceptable and to refrain from endorsing any action that would detract from our immediate and crucial objective of ending the violence so that we may return in earnest to the agreed negotiating process. It is only through such a process that both Israelis and Palestinians can hope to realize their legitimate right to live in peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Spain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland and Lichtenstein — align themselves with this statement.

The European Union strongly condemns and expresses its dismay at the latest outbreak of terror and violence in the Middle East, which has led to more casualties, including a significant number of civilians. We wish to convey our most sincere condolences to the Israelis and the Palestinians, both victims of this situation.

The current spiral of violence must cease immediately, and the suffering of both peoples must be brought to an end. Both parties need to take urgent measures to restore calm and to return to negotiations in order to resolve a conflict that has no military solution. We appeal to the Israeli Government and to the Palestinian Authority to offer, with the assistance of the international community, a perspective that is different from the current perpetuation of violence and of the suffering of their peoples. The lack of such a perspective only encourages further confrontation and plays into the hands of the extremists.

Terror and violence must end. Each side must face up to its responsibilities and take immediate and resolute action.

The Palestinian Authority and its elected President, Yasser Arafat, must do everything possible to put an end to terrorism and the armed intifada, dismantle all terrorist networks, and arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of these kinds of acts. In this regard, we welcome the detention by the Palestinian security forces of those suspected of involvement in the killing of Israel's Minister of Tourism.

To eradicate terrorism and work towards peace, Israel needs a partner. That partner is the Palestinian Authority and its elected President, Yasser Arafat,

whose authority and capacity to fight terrorism must not be weakened by travel restrictions and other obstacles.

The Israeli Government must withdraw its military forces, stop extra-judicial executions and lift the closures and all restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people and its leadership. A total freeze must be imposed on settlement activities, as an immediate step. There must be an end to action against the facilities of the Palestinian Authority and to the destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure and of other facilities that contribute to the economic, social and humanitarian development of the Palestinians and that are financed by the European Union and other donors. We call on the Israeli Government to facilitate the access of humanitarian staff and assistance to the Palestinian populations.

Security is a priority, but it should not be isolated from the need for a political and economic perspective for the Palestinian people. To that end, in the Laeken Declaration of the European Union Council, and in the latest conclusions adopted by our ministers of foreign affairs, the European Union has issued a firm call to the parties to adopt all necessary measures immediately and unconditionally to implement the Tenet ceasefire plan and the Mitchell Committee recommendations. The objective of peace requires that security and political measures be implemented in parallel in a mutually reinforcing way.

As the Secretary-General indicated last Thursday to the Security Council,

> "New thinking and imaginative new ideas are now being proposed from several quarters. This is to be welcomed, and such ideas should be considered promptly and thoroughly both by the parties and by the international community." *(S/PV.4474, p.3)*

The European Union encourages in this regard ongoing contacts between both sides, particularly between the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shimon Peres, and the President of the Palestinian National Legislative Council, Mr. Abu Ala. The European Union also regards as a positive step the proposals of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and looks forward to their further development.

The European Union considers it essential and urgent that the United Nations, the United States, the Russian Federation and the Arab countries that are most closely concerned take resolute concerted action to help the parties break the cycle of violence and commit themselves to resuming political negotiations. In that regard, the High Representative of the European Council, Mr. Javier Solana, is now in the region to maintain the necessary contacts with the parties as a sign of our commitment to assist them in finding a final solution to the conflict.

We stress that a just and lasting settlement of the question must be based on the principles of the Madrid conference, in particular the principle of land for peace, and on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The European Union is convinced that an impartial monitoring mechanism would serve the interests of both parties and is prepared to take an active part in the establishment of such a mechanism. It is equally important to ease the difficult socio-economic situation of the Palestinians as a way of encouraging peace.

The European Union will spare no effort in trying to contribute to reducing the violence and ensuring that Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace and security. That requires the reaffirmation and full recognition of Israel's irrevocable right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, the establishment of a democratic and viable Palestinian State and an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of South Africa, who has asked to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation is pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over this important meeting. It is indeed encouraging to see the Security Council once again discussing the issue of Palestine.

Five days ago, the Secretary-General made what is probably the most sobering assessment of the situation in the Middle East. For the Security Council, whose mandate is the maintenance of peace and security, the Secretary-General's message could not have been more urgent. To quote the Secretary-General, we are indeed "nearing the edge of the abyss" (*S/PV.4474, p. 2*).

The Non-Aligned Movement has consistently maintained that ultimately there can be no military solution to the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The continued escalation of conflict cannot contribute to any solution in the Middle East. In fact, the events of the past 18 months have clearly demonstrated that there can be no unilateral solution to this crisis. It is foreign occupation, settlement activities, collective punishment of Palestinian people, extrajudicial killings, human rights abuses and poverty that are the root causes of violence and insecurity in the region.

Many years ago, the Security Council enshrined the principle of land for peace in its resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which still constitute the internationally accepted basis for a negotiated settlement to the dispute.

The Palestinian Authority was created as an instrument to help lay the foundation for peace among the Palestinian people. But the institutions of the Palestinian Authority find themselves the target of daily military attacks by the Israeli army. This concerted effort is aimed at weakening and discrediting President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. The continued restrictions on the movement of President Arafat, aimed at keeping him under virtual house arrest, are another unacceptable attempt to humiliate the leader of the Palestinian people. However, we believe that all these actions can only make peace difficult to achieve.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that the Israelis and the Palestinians may not be able to end the cycle of violence and resume dialogue without resolute international assistance. The international community must support a peace plan and ensure that there is effective monitoring of the implementation of agreements made. Although the Security Council has yet to be convinced, we believe that the presence of a credible, multinational monitoring mechanism is required on the ground.

South Africa has undertaken many initiatives to facilitate peace in the Middle East as mandated by the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement has a well known principled position calling for a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Recently, President Mbeki invited leading political figures who support peace in the Middle East, both Palestinians and Israelis, to join him and several other prominent South Africans at a presidential retreat at the Spier wine estate in Cape Town from 9 to 11 January 2002. The aims of the Spier retreat were: to support the ongoing initiatives towards the creation of a favourable environment to restart peace negotiations; to share South Africa's experience in negotiations, peacemaking and transition to democracy; and to support the strengthening of the peace camps in Palestine and in Israel, as well as the general dynamic towards peace in the region.

The Spier communiqué, which was issued at the conclusion of the meeting, demonstrates that there are still leaders in Israel and in Palestine who are genuinely committed to dialogue and to building a partnership for peace. President Mbeki and his colleagues are continuing discussions to build on that initiative.

Even in the midst of the growing despair, there remains hope. We appreciate the efforts of other international groups, such as the European Union, in seeking new ways to restart the peace process. We are also particularly encouraged by recent signs of a revival among the peace camps in both Israel and Palestine. That is a fundamental acknowledgement that, ultimately, reconciliation and peace lie in the hands of the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves. It is our collective duty to support them in their search for peace; the international community has a particular role to play in encouraging the re-emergence of those in both Israel and Palestine who support peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to extend to you, Sir, my profound thanks for holding this emergency special meeting at the request of the Group of Arab States. I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am fully confident that your experience and skills will lead us to the desired success.

Allow me also to extend my profound thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Koonjul, for the evident efficiency with which he oversaw the work of the Security Council during the previous month. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the

Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his Special Coordinator, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, for their efforts to find a solution to the tense and dangerous situation confronting our region.

Israeli acts of aggression and attacks on the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority and its institutions and infrastructure continue, with serious consequences. These acts of aggression continue to cause further deterioration of the situation involving the two parties and in the region as a whole. This impacts on the security and stability of the region as a whole. It has been proved that such acts of aggression, combined with the policy of assassinations, the demolition of homes, the military and economic siege of Palestinian villages and towns and of the Palestinian people and leaders, will not lead to safety and security for the Israeli Government and the Israeli people. Furthermore, such acts of aggression constitute a flagrant violation of the agreements signed between the two parties, of the principles of international and humanitarian laws and of relevant international instruments.

In this context, my delegation condemns such unacceptable and totally unjustifiable acts. It also condemns the targeting and killing of civilians on both sides. At the same time, it affirms that the settlement of this conflict should take into consideration the principle of the peaceful coexistence of the Palestinians and the Israelis. Therefore, more than ever before, it is time that the Israeli Government realized that bringing about peace and stability requires the two parties to return to the negotiating table as two equal parties that seek to bring about a settlement safeguarding their rights and their future and to take parallel, mutual steps based on the agreements and obligations already reached between them, particularly ending the use of the Israeli war machine against the Palestinian people and ending the siege imposed on President Arafat.

Taking such steps constitutes the start of the implementation of the Mitchell recommendations for creating the appropriate conditions for a return to the negotiating table. Beginning the final status negotiations is an urgent priority and will lead to the main objectives of the peace process: fully ending occupation, fulfilling the national rights of the Palestinian people, establishing their viable, independent State on their soil, and providing Israel with security.

My delegation welcomes the recent statement by His Majesty, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. It repeats its invitation to the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter by inviting Israel to a full and immediate withdrawal from the areas it has re-occupied and by providing the necessary protection for the Palestinian people, accorded to them by the Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

Within this framework, Jordan has expressed its satisfaction at the results of the Geneva conference held on 5 December 2001. We call upon the Council to compel Israel to implement its resolutions, in particular resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), on which the peace process is based. We also call on the Council to enforce the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its solidarity — King, Government and people — with President Yasser Arafat and the fraternal people of Palestine in their struggle to obtain their legitimate rights, achieve their just national demands and establish their independence over their entire national soil with Al Quds Al-Sharif as their capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Jordan for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting today to consider the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The situation has reached such a low that it has become impossible for the Security Council — the conscience of the international community and the voice of international legitimacy — to remain silent with regard to what is happening.

The bombing, violence, destruction and death which the Palestinian people are living through in the West Bank and Gaza, the siege imposed on the legitimate leadership of the Palestinian people, the flagrant violent acts to which thousands of Palestinian civilians are exposed daily, the victims, killed and injured, are all due to the Israeli Government's belief that violence and repression alone are capable of suppressing the Palestinian people's legitimate rights to self-determination; that the Israeli occupation of

Palestinian and Arab territories can continue; that the popular rising of the intifada seen in Palestine during the last 18 months can be put down by brute military force; and that violence can be perpetrated against innocent and unarmed Palestinians.

Peace in the Middle East cannot be permanent except through the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the complete withdrawal from occupied Arab territories and the respect for the principle of land-for-peace according to the concept established in the Madrid Conference of 1991.

Bringing about a permanent peace in the Middle East requires recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, viable and secure Palestinian State on the occupied territory in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Security cannot be the monopoly of one party. It should be equitable for both Palestinians and Israelis at the same time, so that both Palestinians and Israeli citizens can sleep at night in security and peace. The destruction of Palestinian institutions and the killing of Palestinian leaders and citizens will not halt the spiral of violence in the Middle East. The destruction of the Palestinian economy and infrastructure in the occupied Palestinian territories will not end the will of the Palestinian people to continue their struggle.

Therefore, the Security Council faces a real challenge today — a challenge to the credibility of the international community's conscience, its capacity for fact-finding in the Palestinian territory and its ability to intervene to end the flagrant violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces.

The whole Middle East is aspiring to a permanent and comprehensive peace. For this peace to be achieved and to be permanent, Egypt stresses the need for the following elements. The first is a full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied after 5 June 1967. Secondly, the Palestinians should be given the right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Thirdly, there should be mutual recognition of the right to security of all the peoples and States of the Middle East through agreed arrangements that are equitable for all parties. Fourthly, good-neighbourly relations and constructive cooperation among all people and States of the region should be established in all areas.

These final and just objectives for a satisfactory settlement should be acceptable to all parties. We are fully confident that the Palestinian and Arab parties have adopted such an approach in all the stances and positions they have taken since the Madrid summit of 1991.

What is left to be done is that the Israeli side should also announce its adoption of this approach. Any attempt to implement the final objectives in a conflict that has lasted for more than 100 years requires the return of the parties to the negotiating table. They also need to consider how to implement these objectives pragmatically.

This naturally leads us to demand once again a halt to all armed confrontation and the start of implementation of the Mitchell recommendations and the Tenet arrangements and all security plans and other agreements between the two parties in all their aspects.

My country, Egypt, will continue to uphold this clear vision of how to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement to this conflict. It will continue to uphold its obligation to work seriously and constructively in order to effectively contribute to bringing about this noble objective — a comprehensive and just peace for all the peoples and States of the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, may I at the outset say how pleased I am at seeing you presiding over the Security Council and how satisfied I am, as I am sure are all Member States, for the entirely praiseworthy way that you have been doing so this far. My delegation is also very pleased to see Mexico return to the Council to make a contribution that undoubtedly will be very valuable for the successful outcome of its work.

May I also say how grateful we are to the Ambassador of Mauritius, who has deserved the thanks of our Organization for the talented and remarkably effective way in which he conducted the work of the Council last month.

What other international crisis could legitimately lay claim to the attention of the Security Council as much as the one that we are seeing today, with horror and impotence increasing daily, in occupied Palestine. We are grateful to all Council members for having realized the seriousness and urgency of this by acceding to the request of the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, supported by the Group of Arab States for an immediate meeting of the Security Council.

The unprecedented degree of savagery that the Israeli army has attained these past few weeks and the enormous military means used to break down the resistance of the Palestinian people no longer leave room for any doubt about the term that should be used to describe the situation. Despite the stubborn denials of the Israelis, this is undoubtedly a situation of war. As such, it calls for the urgent implementation of the pertinent instruments of international humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, to assure the protection of the people of Palestine, who have been targeted by a regular army, without prejudice to any additional measures of protection that the United Nations is bound under the Charter to take as a matter of urgency.

It is quite clear that the military actions that have been directed against Palestinian Authority buildings and the destruction of its infrastructures, the repeated invasions of the territories under Palestinian jurisdiction, the physical isolation of the legitimate leadership, democratically elected by the Palestinian people and represented by President Yasser Arafat, the military and diplomatic harassment that has been visited upon the Palestinian Authority are part and parcel of a deliberate policy to reduce to naught what remains of what was achieved in Oslo and to completely disrupt the peace dynamic started in Madrid.

Furthermore, the obstruction of any attempt to reactivate the peace process under the specious pretext of responding to acts of resistance caused by the heightened feelings of a people that has been occupied for generations, by political assassination and by State terrorism has now been raised to the status of national policy, openly approved in the Council of Ministers by the Government of Israel, and which has been stubbornly pursued, despite the unanimous condemnation of the international community, in a very clear and conscious effort to create the conditions most favourable for the political process and most conducive to heightening the intensity of the violence.

The objective is in fact to attack the credibility of the Palestinian Authority, to break its internal workings and to make it impossible for it to discharge its obligations to maintain public order, while demanding that it control the legitimate revolt of the people against the occupier, which the constantly growing violence of the repression feeds daily, leading to an infernal spiral that, if we are not careful, may well accelerate and reach the point of no return.

In other words, this Israeli policy, which has been carefully thought out, is aimed at discrediting and disqualifying the concept of a viable and responsible Palestinian State, which is the final purpose of the peace process, particularly since this eternal demand of the Palestinian people registered a decisive breakthrough on 10 November 2001, when it was referred to by the President of the United States of America before the General Assembly of the United Nations.

In parallel, and to set aside definitively any further chance of relaunching the peace process, the Israeli Government pursues, tirelessly and with impunity, its policy of territorial expansion in violation of the resolutions of the United Nations, and has turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the international community to freeze its colonization policies. The result of the worst-case policy pursued by Israel is that the Middle East today is at the edge of the abyss, the closest it has ever been to a generalized confrontation.

In the light of this situation, it is imperative that the international community cease being merely a passive bystander watching the Middle East sink into violence, and assume with courage and determination its responsibilities before this nervous region, as the Security-General warned us, begins to tip into total war, with dramatic consequences for all.

From this point of view, Algeria considers opportune and welcome the declared intention of the Secretary-General to intensify the consultations, through his Special Coordinator, with the members of the "Quartet" as well as with the other regional and international actors concerned in this matter.

Nevertheless, my country believes that the Security Council, in view of its particular responsibilities to maintain international peace and

security and its irreplaceable role, is called upon with increased urgency to involve itself directly by condemning this worst-case policy of the Israeli Government, calling for the immediate cessation of violence and sending, on the spot, a mission composed of its members in order to examine, in the occupied territories, the ways and means of providing the protection that the Palestinian people is entitled to expect from the international community, particularly through the deployment of international observers, and in order to set all the elements in place to undertake effective and priority action to reduce the level of violence and relaunch the peace process.

Therefore, in order to restore a minimum of confidence, mend the broken threads of dialogue and relaunch the peace process with increased determination, in a new spirit and, we hope this time, with greater chances of success, it seems to us necessary to act from a common ground, acceptable to all and accepted by all, such as that provided by the recommendations contained in the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan.

On the basis of a balanced approach, the Mitchell report envisages a number of measures that would help to set back on track the long-stymied peace process through stopping the acts of violence, freezing the colonization, re-establishing confidence and resuming the negotiations. Therefore, the Security Council must call for the total and immediate implementation of these recommendations. Furthermore, it is essential that an impartial monitoring mechanism be set up promptly in the field to carry forward the Mitchell report.

We are more than ever convinced that peace is a strategic choice and that there is no alternative to a return to the negotiating table. Therefore, Algeria is firmly attached to the idea of a peaceful, just, lasting and global settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, based on international legality, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on Israel's respect for the commitments undertaken as part of the peace process, particularly the principle of land for peace agreed in Madrid, and on the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian territories it has occupied since 1967. Such a settlement would make it possible to realize the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish its own independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Saudi Arabia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the debate on the item on the Council's agenda. Following the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, that the representative be invited to participate in the debate, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having promptly convened this urgent meeting of the Security Council to examine the situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories and the dangerous escalation of violence there.

We must recall that this escalation was provoked by the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is regrettable that today we cannot but recognize that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has reached such an unprecedented level that it represents a serious threat to international peace and security.

It is perfectly clear that the current Israeli Government is persisting in the use of excessive force, as reported by Israel's closest friends. This behaviour has become a style of government that is part of an organized, methodical repressive policy targeting the defenceless Palestinian people and aimed at undermining what is left of the peace process.

Israel is continuing its policy of physical liquidation of innocent Palestinian civilians and their leaders. It has pursued targeted extrajudicial assassinations, in flagrant contravention of international law, humanitarian norms and moral values.

The cycle of Israeli violence is such that the army is shamelessly taking over zones under Palestinian

control and economically throttling the civilian population. It has also continued to launch attacks with heavy weaponry, causing severe damage to the infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority and the institutions that care for the daily needs of the Palestinians, which were financed by international partners, such as the European Union. Even United Nations buildings and its staff members have not been spared, as if Israel had become the enemy of all.

We are convinced that under these circumstances, which are cause for deep concern, the time has come to urgently put an end to the escalating violence. The international community cannot remain stymied in the face of further deterioration and stagnation of the situation. The United Nations, and especially the Security Council, must assume their full responsibility to bring Israel to end immediately its practices and aggression. Israel must submit to the dictates of international and humanitarian laws and urgently provide the required protection for Palestinian civilians in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The Council has on several occasions endeavoured to arrive at a resolution based on an approach that concentrates on prevention to deal with the crisis situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. These attempts have unfortunately failed. It is now clear that the Council must adopt a resolution under circumstances that are no longer a matter of prevention, and that it must address a painful situation where a whole people are threatened with elimination. The Council must move rapidly to avoid what could be an even worse situation.

We agree with the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator, Mr. Larsen, that focusing on the security aspect alone has become a barrier rather than a bridge to reaching political dialogue. It is clear that Israeli policy creates obstructions. The Israeli Government continues to impose conditions and unilateral demands on the legitimate Palestinian Authority. This has resulted in squandering the opportunity to resume negotiations and achieve peace on the basis of the Mitchell and Tenet recommendations in the wake of dissipating violence after President Arafat's statement on the 16 December 2001.

The lack of seriousness in the Israeli political discourse and its illogical approach manifest themselves in Israel's focusing only on the security level and on assigning the sole responsibility for that to the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, Israeli armed forces deliberately undermine the basis of the Authority through daily provocations and deprive it of its means of intervention, as well as attacking the buildings of Palestinian security services and killing its members.

Does it really make sense that we demand that Mr. Arafat, while he is under siege at his place of residence by heavy Israeli machinery, stop the defensive reaction of the Palestinian people? How can the Palestinian Authority keep order and security in the face of daily Israeli attempts to destroy the Palestinian security apparatus? How can the situation in the occupied territories be calmed when they are under daily bombardment by air, sea and land by the occupation force?

Despite the seriousness of the current situation, we believe that the solutions are clear. Tunisia has always maintained a firm position in favour of peace and has advocated political settlement as a strategic option. It therefore appeals to the international community and to the co-sponsors of the peace process to bring pressure to bear on Israel to join the peace process seriously, responsibly and without procrastination, to return to the negotiating table, to respect international legality and its instruments — particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace — to withdraw from all territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority and to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to the establishment of an independent State on its land with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The world has entered a critical stage of its history, demonstrated by globalization and new global threats to international peace and security. Perhaps we can learn from the recent painful events that have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent people. In that spirit, we believe it is necessary to adopt a preventive approach in dealing with these threats on the basis of the premise that security is a comprehensive, integral concept and that our commitment to that concept has to be collective and international.

It is therefore of the utmost importance and priority that the international community today act in

concert and pool its efforts in a unified front to confront the challenges facing humanity. At the same time, it is not possible for that commitment to be as credible and as effective as we would wish if we accept that some are exempt from respecting it.

In that regard, it is today unacceptable that Israel alone be granted an exceptional status in the international community. It cannot be allowed to seek cover under a narrow security perspective that allows it to infringe upon international law and to practise a policy of force and fait accompli.

Breaking the vicious cycle of violence has today become a collective responsibility requiring a political solution to the crisis. It has become imperative that new political horizons be opened before the parties in order to move the peace process forward. It is also necessary to deal firmly with the political adventurism and the policy of dictates followed by the current Israeli Government. This urgent demand is no longer a Palestinian or Arab demand only; it has also become the demand of moderate, peace-loving circles in Israel itself, as the policy of the current Government has proven that security and peace cannot be born out of oppression, intransigence and domination.

I would not wish to end my statement without particularly stressing the following points. First, it is imperative that the blockade currently imposed on President Arafat be lifted and that he be ensured complete freedom of movement.

Secondly, the Israeli Government must furnish proof of its willingness to achieve peace and declare its desire to resume negotiations, especially since Palestinian leaders proclaim this every day.

Thirdly, we urge that negotiations be resumed urgently on the basis of international legitimacy and new instruments, especially the Mitchell and Tenet plans.

Fourthly, there is no doubt that the United States has an essential role to play in settling this conflict. Both President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell in Louisville enunciated this vision. Recently, other new ideas have been proposed, particularly by France and the Arab side, which has never stopped demonstrating its full willingness to find a political settlement to the Palestinian question and to the situation in the Middle East. We welcome all these ideas and believe that it is high time that they be turned into practical and concrete initiatives.

For more than a generation now, Tunisia has consistently advocated a political solution to the Palestinian question and to the situation in the Middle East. Today, at this delicate international and political juncture, it appeals to the international community to act with the urgency required by the gravity of the situation in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): "Occupation corrupts. More accurately, occupation has already corrupted us. Discrimination has become our norm and insensitivity our way of being."

These bitterly perceptive words, it may be assumed, are hardly my own nor those of a traditional foe of Tel Aviv. It was quite simply — and this makes the accusation even more damning — the President of the Knesset, Avraham Burg, who made this very edifying point, as reported in a major European daily that can hardly be suspected of pro-Palestinian leanings.

Clearly, ever since the provocative visit of the future Israeli Prime Minister to the forecourt of the mosques on 28 September 2000 and the beginning of the ensuing intifadah, the occupying forces have fallen back on systematic and disproportionate reprisals, destroying the infrastructures of the Palestinian Authority, increasing their acts of territorial aggression and imposing on President Yasser Arafat an unacceptable house arrest in Ramallah, with, it has been suggested, the tolerance, or even unspoken blessing, of certain allies.

Under the impotent, evasive and embarrassed gaze of the international community in the face of attacks by terrorist groups on Israeli civilians, and particularly of the martyrdom of the Palestinian people subjected to unbearable suffering, humiliation and unjustified collective punishment, the peace process seems to be definitively deadlocked, even doomed, despite the fact that it emerged from the 1993 Oslo consensus and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which were the bases

of mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and of the subsequent establishment of the Palestinian Authority in Jericho and Gaza.

Some have even gone so far as to suggest that the peace process, to which those who favour a negotiated solution at all costs cling so desperately, has irretrievably collapsed under Israeli raids and bombing, burying the Mitchell and Tenet plans, with the active connivance of hardliners from both camps, paradoxically united by the apocalyptic dream of total war engulfing all the Middle East and bearing away the regimes scorned by these impenitent extremists.

We must therefore act very quickly to eliminate the dangers of a generalized conflagration that will have predictable if incalculable consequences for the region and the world. That is why many people of good will have generously committed themselves to and focused their energies on our admired and esteemed Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, together with the quartet of mediators, with a view to resurrecting the peace process.

For its part, our Committee wishes to recall that the road to peace is indissolubly connected to the end of the Israeli occupation and to the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State coexisting with the State of Israel. At the same time, the Committee believes that the conclusion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement agreement, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), remains linked to the partition of Jerusalem and its declaration as an open city and capital of the two States of Israel and Palestine, as well as to a solution that is fair and equitable for all to the problem of refugees and their right of return.

We strongly urge the parties, Israel first among them, to adhere strictly to those resolutions and to the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. We solemnly call on the protagonists and stakeholders to undertake a salutary return to the negotiating table and exhort the donor community to mobilize significant economic assistance and large-scale emergency help for the Palestinian people in its extreme distress.

In that spirit, it should be noted — neither with displeasure nor with wide-eyed optimism — that there has been movement, as yet timid, on the peace horizon, based on the perpetuation of the American dynamic unleashed in Louisville towards the recognition, now irreversible and unanimous, of the need to create a State of Palestine within secure and internationally guaranteed borders.

In this particular case, we need only refer to the positive views once again reiterated by President Arafat in *The New York Times* or to the declaration of Israel proclaiming its adhesion to resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to the Mitchell and Tenet plans, as we have just heard. Furthermore, we need only recall the forward-looking thinking of certain leaders of Arab countries — I am thinking here of Saudi Arabia — regarding the principle of normalization in exchange for total withdrawal; the very wise European proposals for mutual recognition between the Israelis and Palestinians; or the most recent contacts between African leaders, following the example of the President of Senegal, with regard to a possible continental initiative within the framework of the United Nations.

The Security Council, the co-sponsors of the Madrid process and the United Nations thus find themselves standing at the crossroads. Intentions to attain peace have been proclaimed, the desire for negotiation has been made clear, and the support of the international community is no longer in question. The stage having thus been set, it is up to all of us to play our part and translate the commitments that have been undertaken *urbi et orbi* into clear and unequivocal actions, with the support of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. We must free the peace process from the hellish cycle of violence, fuelled by political impasse and diplomatic immobility bound to the Procrustean bed of military and security exigencies. Thus, the coherent and realistic proposals that have already been submitted to the Council enjoy the full support of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I would like warmly to congratulate you, Sir, and your predecessor, the Ambassador of Mauritius, for the very fruitful work done in the context of the presidency of the Security Council. I am particularly grateful to you, Sir, for having provided me with an opportunity to take part in this important debate — the result of the laudable initiative of our colleague from Yemen on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

As we renew our support for President Yasser Arafat, the Committee demands, in the interests of

peace, that his freedom of movement be fully restored, of which he has been deprived in such an outrageous manner.

I would like to conclude with the words of philosopher and historian Yirmiyahu Yovel, Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at the New School for Social Research in New York. He stated:

> "We are in the worst situation that we have been in since the foundation of the State of Israel, because of the lack of hope, from the right and the left ... In a society that is resigned to living with violence, we must resuscitate the hope for a way out of the impasse".

The words of President Arafat, isolated in Ramallah, echo this thought, and I would like to close my statement with them. He said,

> "I am hopeful ... We are ready, for our part, to put an end to the conflict and to negotiate with the head of the Israeli Government, whoever he may be and without regard to his past ... I reiterate my steadfast commitment to a just and comprehensive peace — the peace of the brave".

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Brazil. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council. Mexico has been an invaluable addition to this important body. Your delegation's active and innovative presence in the Council is in line with the best traditions of Mexico's highly regarded diplomacy and its outstanding contribution to international peace and security.

This is, indeed, a timely and necessary open debate. The continuing crisis in the Middle East cannot be regarded as merely a regional issue. It concerns the international community as a whole. This is a crucial moment. This is also the appropriate place for the United Nations to express its deep regret at the death toll caused by the conflict, to reaffirm its hope that the peace process can be revitalized and to articulate specific proposals to this end.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council is now receiving periodic briefings on the situation in the Middle East and that it has agreed to hold regular consultations on this pressing issue. We hope that closer monitoring may foster constructive and imaginative proposals for an adequate settlement of differences, bringing renewed prospects for peace and reconciliation for all peoples in the Middle East.

When I last spoke to the Council, in December, I stressed precisely the point that we hoped that in the future the Security Council would be able to fully exert its responsibilities with regard to that question. In recent years, Member States have had reason enough to be dismayed by the fact that the Council seemed unwilling, or at least reluctant, to fully take on its responsibilities with respect to one of the most pressing and deadly conflicts facing the world. We fully agree with Secretary-General Kofi Annan's view that

> "it is imperative for the Security Council and the wider international community to work in a concerted manner with the parties towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peaceful settlement of the conflict". (*S/PV.4474, p. 3*)

The role of the Council needs to be strengthened in times of crisis.

We all dream of a day when the spiral of violence will finally come to an end in the Middle East and when all peoples in the region will be able to devote their energy to the full realization of their destiny, with social justice and opportunities for all.

Yet during past months, a shocked world has been following the consequences of a dreadful, vicious cycle of terrorist acts and indiscriminate reprisals. The number of dead and wounded — most of them civilians — on both sides is increasing day by day. The economic prospects are dire; a large part of the population is deprived of its basic needs. There is loss of capacity, and investments are being deflected that could foster the well-being of the people. Total mistrust is the prevailing sentiment among the parties, and that prevents them from taking bold steps towards peace.

The United Nations could certainly make a contribution to change this sad situation. For its part, the Security Council has full legitimacy — and the right tools at its disposal — to exercise its role.

We would like to suggest that, to the extent possible, all periodic briefings by the Secretary-General and members of the Secretariat on the evolving situation in the Middle East be made in public

meetings, without, of course, detriment to in camera discussions by the Council.

What, in concrete terms, can the Security Council actually do at this juncture? How might it contribute to salvaging the peace process and restoring hope for a long-lasting solution? It can certainly do a lot. First and foremost, the Council can, in clear terms, convey to both the Israeli and Palestinian leadership our collective dismay about the fact that they are failing to live up to their commitments. The belief in the possibility of a negotiated solution to the conflict must be kept alive. The Council must not fail to exert the right amount of pressure on both sides. We also encourage the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to help the parties implement the recommendations of the Mitchell report, which have been accepted but not even marginally implemented.

We strongly deplore all acts of violence, and particularly the terrorist attacks and suicide bombings that continue to afflict Israeli civilians. In the same vein, we also strongly deplore the excessive use of force by Israeli military forces, especially against civilian targets, including the deliberate destruction of infrastructure in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We call for the lifting of the closures that are stifling the Palestinian economy.

There must be no artificial preconditions of any kind for the parties to take the road back to the negotiating table. The resumption of the peace process cannot remain hostage to extremist actions.

We regret the maintenance of the virtual house arrest imposed on Chairman Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian Authority plays an essential role. It is an indispensable party in the quest for peace and, as such, needs to be fully preserved, in conditions that allow it to meet its political and security commitments.

We consider that full freedom of movement for Chairman Arafat would enable both parties to start implementing, in full and without delay, the Mitchell Committee recommendations and the Tenet understandings, so as to secure a durable ceasefire.

Political will must be mustered in order to resume a meaningful dialogue aimed at reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the understandings reached between the parties.

Since the Palestinian question was placed on the United Nations agenda, Brazil has consistently advocated a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

As President Fernando Henrique Cardoso stated last year before the General Assembly,

> "Just as it supported the creation of the State of Israel, Brazil today calls for concrete measures towards the setting up of a Palestinian state that is democratic, united and economically viable. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and respect for the existence of Israel as a sovereign, free and secure State are essential if the Middle East is to rebuild its future in peace. This is a moral debt owed by the United Nations. It is a task that must not be postponed." (*A/56/PV.44, p. 6*)

We welcome all proposals aimed at fostering the peace negotiations and at providing an answer to the call made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan for a new kind of thinking and imaginative ideas.

In this respect, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia recently made a specific proposal that resonates in the spirits of all those who long for peace.

The Security Council must consider how it can contribute to the full exploration of these ideas.

Brazil remains prepared to take part in this effort, in any way it can, so as to help achieve the goal of political freedom, peace, stability and prosperity for all in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Morocco. I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to extend to you and to the other members of the Council our thanks for your immediate response to the request made by the Arab Group to convene an urgent meeting of the Security Council to discuss the tragic situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Let me also extend to you our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency

of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that your skill and wisdom will enable you ably to conduct the deliberations of the Council on this matter of grave and important significance to international security.

We also wish to extend our thanks to your predecessor for his efforts last month. By the same token, I wish to express appreciation to the Security Council for its decision to discuss recent developments relating to the question of the Middle East at least once a month. However, events have shown that this question deserves to be discussed daily in the Council, given the deterioration in the Palestinian arena and the setbacks plaguing peace efforts in the region.

The Security Council is meeting today under special and extraordinary circumstances, marked by grave danger and by the serious deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories due to the continued and intensified Israeli aggression and practices.

Our delegation condemns Israel's continued and systematic escalation of its military campaign against the defenceless Palestinian people, its resort to collective punishment, the destruction of official buildings of the Palestinian National Authority and its socio-economic infrastructures, its policy of assassinations that target symbols of the Palestinian Authority, and the economic and military siege of Palestinian villages and towns. These practices constitute a blatant violation of international resolutions and the norms of international humanitarian law, as well as of relevant international instruments, including the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

It is no secret, neither to you, Mr. President, nor to the Council, that such practices have resulted in tremendous, pent-up despair and frustration for the Palestinian people, in tandem with the faltering peace process and the continuation of occupation, as well as Israel's disregard for international legitimacy.

Morocco has contributed to international efforts to end the conflict in the region. It rejects all Israeli attempts to undermine the Palestinian National Authority and to marginalize its legitimate President, Mr. Yasser Arafat. We emphasize that the Palestinian National Authority is the only legitimate and sole authority able to play the role of peace partner with a view to achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Any attempt to undermine this authority would pose a grave danger to security and stability in the region.

The policy of the current Israeli Government will aggravate the situation and lead to the continuation of the cycle of violence and to more victims. It will also endanger stability and peace in the region and the future of the peace process. Israel's handling of this crisis on the basis of security alone will only escalate acts of violence.

This conflict will not be settled through the use of force or through the intensification of security and coercive measures. It can be accomplished only through immediate, unconditional resumption of negotiations undertaken with goodwill and courage to make the process succeed.

There is no doubt that Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories lies at the heart of the crisis and of the entire question of the Middle East. Anyone who follows current events and developments will clearly realize that it is the intention of the Israeli Government to perpetuate its occupation of the Palestinian territories. My delegation believes that there is no future for occupation, no matter how powerful the occupier. We believe also that a just and equitable peace is the foundation of stability and security in the region.

Morocco remains convinced that the option of peace and of keeping to the path of negotiations on the basis of international legitimacy continues to be the only way to extricate the Middle East from the whirlwind of violence and counter-violence. In that connection, Morocco welcomes recent initiatives that have been announced, intended to free the region from the logic of violence and to revive negotiations, particularly the initiative of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, which has been accepted and eagerly encouraged by the international community.

One month ago the Al-Quds Committee met at Marrakesh under the chairmanship of His Majesty Mohammed VI. His Majesty appealed to all members of the international community to focus the necessary awareness and sense of responsibility on this explosive situation. Events in the Middle East have direct repercussions for international peace and stability. He further said that immediate resolute intervention by the international community, particularly the Security Council and the co-sponsors of the peace process, is

urgently needed to rescue the entire region, and the world, from an avoidable tragedy; the international community must compel Israel to comply with the decisions of international legitimacy.

More than ever before, the Security Council is called upon to restore the rights of those who are entitled to them, and to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in the region by calling for an immediate halt to Israeli aggression and by sending international observers to provide the Palestinian people with the international protection they need and to monitor the establishment of security in accordance with international resolutions and conventions. The Council should urge Israel to implement the Mitchell and Tenet recommendations with a view to creating the objective circumstances needed for the resumption of the peace process.

The Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, said as much to the Security Council less than a week ago:

> "A reduction in the violence is the most immediate priority. ... It has to be addressed alongside key political issues, particularly the question of land, and economic and social issues, including the increasingly critical, desperate conditions of the Palestinians.
>
> "Failure to address these issues together will only spawn new and perhaps deadlier exchanges of reciprocal violence. ... It is imperative that both parties exercise maximum restraint, particularly with regard to attacks against civilians." (*S/PV.4474, p. 3*)

In spite of the difficult situation with regard to halting violence in the region, the Kingdom of Morocco is hopeful that this can be achieved. It is also of the firm view that peace is the only viable option; it should be founded on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, the establishment of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital, the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, and the return to Lebanon of its remaining occupied territories, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Morocco for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): Once again we return to this Chamber, as we have done so many times before, to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Like others, Sir, we too are happy to see you presiding over this important Security Council meeting.

The deteriorating situation in Palestine now threatens to nullify all the efforts made over the past two decades to bring peace and stability to the Middle East. With the peace process derailed and violence spiraling out of control, never in the history of the Palestine crisis has the situation been so fragile or the need to respond more critical.

We have debated the issue of Palestine for well over half a century in this chamber. It is one of the two unresolved disputes — the other being the Kashmir issue — involving the destiny of peoples and their inalienable right to self-determination which have serious implications for world peace and security and have been on the agenda of the Security Council all these years. In both cases, there are Security Council resolutions which provide a framework for their resolution and, unfortunately, in both cases the resolutions remain on the shelves of the Council, unimplemented.

The Security Council's resolutions on Palestine call for peace in the Middle East based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories. Yet, as these resolutions remain unimplemented, this peace also remains as elusive as ever. Violence continues to spiral out of control. The Palestinian people, like others in similar circumstances, continue to be deprived of their legitimate right to self-determination. While we have waited for this body to act and to implement its own resolutions, the situation has continued to deteriorate, with flickers of hope turning into ashes of despair. The Secretary-General could not have put it more appropriately when he said that "we are nearing the edge of the abyss".

We agree with Secretary-General that the situation is bleak, but not irreversible, and that there is room for hope. We also agree with him that the situation now unfolding requires urgent steps. The Secretary-General has also given a realistic expression to the collective hopes of the United Nations

membership for an end to this dismal situation by welcoming what he described as "new thinking and imaginative ideas" that seem to find currency in the face of the aggravating situation. This new thinking, if pursued in good earnest, should augur well for the prospect of peace in the Middle East. Every challenge brings with it an opportunity and, indeed, exceptional challenges warrant exceptional responses. The time has now come to close this unpleasant chapter of conflict and misery and turn over a new leaf for peace and coexistence on the basis of justice and equity. In building upon any new approach, we do not have to look very far beyond Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which provide the fundamental basis for peace in that region.

Violence only begets violence. It solves no problem. The present deteriorating situation warrants our urgent attention. The international community must act and act with determination to prevent the situation from worsening. The prospects for peace in the Middle East will remain bleak without the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction. The peace process needs to be put back on track, and that is not possible without a return to the situation that existed before September 2000. Violence of all sorts and on any scale is deplorable and must come to an end. The recommendations of the Mitchell report need to be implemented. A better environment needs to be created to ensure the safety of all civilians. The international community, particularly the guarantors of the peace process, must use their influence and good offices to ensure full compliance with the peace agreements and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We all know that no lasting peace in the Middle East will be possible without achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. And we also know that the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to self-determination and the withdrawal of occupation forces from the occupied territories, as well as the dismantling of illegal settlements, are the essential ingredients of a peace settlement. We urge the concerned parties, especially the guarantors of the peace process, to bring this about. We also call on the Security Council to fulfil its Charter obligations by taking urgent steps to safeguard peace and security in the region.

The international community must encourage and facilitate a meaningful dialogue with a view to breaking this gridlock which has held the entire Middle East region hostage for so long. The United Nations has always upheld the legitimate struggles of peoples for self-determination and must do so now. It has a responsibility to take the lead role in brokering peace based on the Security Council resolutions. This is the least the Organization can do to justify the Nobel Peace Prize that it recently shared with the Secretary-General in recognition of its Charter mandate to ensure world peace and security.

The present challenge provides us with an opportunity to move away from the brink. The time has come for a purposeful dialogue to end the legacy of violence and conflict. It must not be allowed to get lost in the maze of obstructionism and filibustering. The time has come for the international community to enable this Council to uphold its moral and legal obligations under the Charter. Those who have the responsibility to maintain international peace must act now to revive the process of negotiations and the hopes of durable peace in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Bangladesh to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We applaud the manner of your current leadership of the Council. We also commend Mauritius for theirs in January.

The backdrop of events in the Middle East against which we meet is a tale of an unfolding tragedy. Two peoples, connected to each other across the widest possible socio-historical spectrum, are involved in a seemingly intractable gory conflict as the world looks helplessly on. The Council was created to address issues that threaten regional and global security. Few other problems today qualify more for its attention. In meeting today under your stewardship, Sir, the Council is discharging a moral and ethical obligation.

The situation is rendered sadder still, because more than ever before there is a broad agreement on the vision that is the ultimate solution. It includes the creation of a separate independent State called Palestine. The end is thus in view. The question is how to proceed towards it.

Violence and terror are not the instruments that will advance the achievements of this vision. Neither will gross and systematic violations of the Geneva Conventions. These methods must be abjured. That

would be the categorical imperative for the parties to stay on the course to peace.

To remain in this path, it has to be cleared of impediments. Of these, occupation remains central. Once this root cause of conflict is eliminated, the journey to peace will be immeasurably facilitated. This must be simultaneously accompanied by a reduction in violence and a buttressing of a sense of security of the protagonists. Progress on the linked issues must be achieved in tandem.

The practice of building settlements has been shown to be clearly most unproductive. It must cease forthwith. Excessive and disproportionate use of military force must be ended. Actions along these lines are bound to induce positive response. As the Secretary-General has identified, the Tenet understandings and the Mitchell proposals provide a possible way out, as do the other international agreements between the parties concerned. These, of course, must be based on Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with a view to establishing a State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

We are vastly encouraged by the new thinking that now appears to be emanating from the Saudi leadership. High praise is due to Crown Prince Abdullah for setting in motion a set of fresh ideas. These deserved to be fleshed out and taken note of. We are heartened that this is indeed being done.

There will be a need to identify an appropriate forum to deliberate on these initiatives. In December, in the General Assembly, my delegation suggested the holding of continuous talks between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders involving the Presidents of all United Nations organs — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — and the Secretary-General, till such time as a result is achieved. This will embrace the totality of the United Nations system, enabling it to address the issue in a comprehensive manner. This is perhaps the only way forward.

This will involve a united and serious effort for tranquillity in the region whence have emerged the three great faiths of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. All three are linked in enjoining peace upon their adherents. Their followers owe them the duty to respond to their message of harmony. One massive endeavour may indeed result in the realization of the aspiration that the Muslim, the Jew and the Christian could begin to live side by side in bliss in Palestine and Israel — the land that had in the past given birth to hope for humanity. Bangladesh believes that goal is achievable if only the requisite political courage is forthcoming.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on the excellent manner in which you have guided the work of the Council throughout this month. We are doubly satisfied, since you represent a country that is united with Cuba by deep ties of friendship and fraternity.

Convening this meeting is fully justified. The escalation of violence in the region over the past few days has reached extremely dangerous levels. The Israeli forces have renewed their action against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The most recent attacks carried out with missiles from warships, planes, helicopters and tanks have killed dozens of Palestinians and injured many others. The attacks of the Israeli forces are now being directed against installations that serve as headquarters for the Palestinian National Authority, and they have surrounded President Arafat in Ramallah and encircled him with tanks in a completely unacceptable situation, tantamount to house arrest, which must be ceased immediately.

United Nations employees have been injured as a result of recent Israeli attacks, and offices or installations of the United Nations or directly related to the Organization, including schools, have been damaged.

This is occurring on a daily basis. The Council continues to patently shirk its responsibility. It passively contemplates the situation, which has a direct effect on international peace and security. This organ has not even managed to set up a protection force or some other, similar impartial mechanism that could protect the innocent Palestine population, see to a ceasefire and monitor the situation in the field.

Veto number 24 of the United States on a draft resolution on the Palestine question, to which we were all witness on 14 December, prevented the Security

Council, once again, from discharging the functions that are entrusted to it in the Charter.

The paralysis of the Council with respect to the situation in Palestine is apparent not only when it fails to approved urgently needed resolutions, but also when it does not act to ensure compliance with those that it has already adopted.

A lasting and just peace can only be achieved if Israel complies with all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council, including resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of this body, and it respects its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The United States must immediately suspend financial support for belligerent goals and military supplies to Israel, which, as evidence of complicity, include planes, helicopters and missiles that are used against civilians. It must also condemn state terrorism by Israel, if it does indeed want a global war on terrorism, wherever and however it appears.

Cuba considers that the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people against Israeli aggression and occupation is legitimate, and we feel deep solidarity with their resistance and spirit of defiance that they have expressed in the intifada.

At the same time, Cuba condemns suicide attacks with bombs and other acts against Israeli civilians, innocent victims of the spiral of violence that is provoked by the policy of their Government. We also oppose the manipulation of these isolated acts to call into question the Palestinian people's exercise of legitimate defence and to justify selective and large-scale action against the Palestinian people.

Once again, we call upon the Security Council to discharge its responsibilities and act without delay.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform Council members that, in view of the late hour, and with their concurrence, I shall suspend the meeting after we have heard the next speaker, who will be the representative of Canada. We will resume the meeting tomorrow, 27 February, at 6 p.m.

I now invite the representative of Canada to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada): Mr. President, I too want to join the others who have congratulated you on the way in which you have managed the Council's time, not least tonight.

(*spoke in French*)

I take this opportunity to speak in this necessary and timely debate. We pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the resounding comments made in this Chamber a few days ago. The tragic worsening of the situation in the Middle East, particularly the increase in the number of civilian victims on both sides of the conflict, reinforces our dismay and indignation at the status quo. We cannot allow this inertia to go on indefinitely. We must help the parties to find the determination to escape the vicious cycle of violence.

(*spoke in English*)

In this quagmire unilateral measures to enhance security succeed only in undermining it. The rising toll of death and destruction on both sides of this conflict must be brought to a stop.

Canada continues to support the security, well-being and rights of Israel, including in particular its right to live in peace with its neighbours within secure and recognized boundaries. Canada also recognizes and supports the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a viable, independent State at peace with its neighbours. The last 17 months present conclusive evidence that neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians will be able to live within secure, internationally recognized borders until both do. It is our firm conviction that genuine, enduring security for both can be achieved only at the negotiating table.

Canada urges the parties to end the violence and to reactivate the political process, which urgently requires new energy and new effort. We welcome the ideas voiced by Saudi Arabia in recent days that could point the way to a solution based on the cardinal resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). All serious proposals are welcome and merit thorough consideration.

At the same time, ending the violence remains our foremost priority. The Mitchell recommendations and the Tenet proposals have for some time provided formulas for this. Courage and compromise are required on all sides if peace is to be achieved and if the hard-won gains of earlier peacemakers are not to be wasted. Let the parties pursue all avenues to end the violence and resume negotiations, and let us here all resolve to exercise our influence, individually and

collectively, to help the parties help themselves back onto the road to peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The meeting is suspended. We will resume tomorrow, Wednesday, 27 February, at 6 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 9.45 p.m.